

IF ALL
THE WORLD'S
A STAGE,
WE LEAD THE
STANDING
OVATION.







AUCKLAND THOROUGHBRED RACING SINCE 1874

FOREWORD

With the 2023/24 racing season upon us, and the return to Ellerslie imminent, it was the perfect time to give Auckland Thoroughbred Racing a new visual identity and brand personality that will see us into this new era of racing in Auckland and beyond.

We're so proud to show you this in a variety of ways over the coming season, but first up is in the pages of this magazine.

WE
INVITE YOU
TO
READ ON



The history of Auckland Racing Club and Counties Racing Club is significant, and not to be forgotten, however Auckland Thoroughbred Racing has its sights set firmly on the future. We wanted to be cognizant of this heritage, while creating a look and feel that is modern and fresh, to better reflect our club values and speak to our relentless focus on creating a sustainable future for racing.

It was also our goal to create a brand that reflects you, our industry and community. Whether you're a Club member, breeder, trainer, jockey, sponsor, owner, attendee or otherwise, this brand heroes your dedication and passion for thoroughbreds and the sport of thoroughbred racing. We share your love and commitment and want Auckland Thoroughbred Racing to be the stage from which the best of the New Zealand racing industry is showcased.

On a more personal note, it has been an absolute privilege to be holding the 'marketing reins' at such a significant time for the business. The creation of our Auckland Thoroughbred Racing family of brands, encompassing the Club, Ellerslie Racecourse, Pukekohe Park and our event centre (the newly coined Ellerslie Events) was an opportunity beyond my wildest dreams. I thank my wider marketing team, CEO Paul Wilcox and the Auckland Thoroughbred Racing Board for their support.

I'd also like to recognise our agency partners, True and Calibrate. Their excitement for the project and the effort they've put in is unmatched. I thank them for truly understanding and respecting the responsibility that came with bringing these iconic brands to life.

My final thank you is to Aidan Rodley, who took on the role of associate editor of this inaugural Auckland Thoroughbred Racing magazine. With many of his own ventures on the go, his enthusiasm and dedication to the project spoke volumes and it was a pleasure working with him.

Once you've devoured these pages, next up will be the launch of our new Auckland Thoroughbred Racing website in late October, bringing both of our racing venues under one digital roof. I'm confident it will also exceed your expectations.

Happy reading, and I look forward to seeing many of you oncourse soon.

LAURA MADDEN

Executive General Manager — Marketing
Auckland Thoroughbred Racing



ATR LEADING THE WAY

Such exciting times. It feels like the dawning of a new golden age in racing is a real possibility. Entain's much-heralded arrival as New Zealand's new wagering provider has already seen the announcement of significant increases in stakes money, an incentive for increased owner participation which could begin a snowball effect to tangible industry growth. The future, finally, looks rosy.

•

AIDAN RODLEY

Associate Editor — ATR Magazine

And, as always, Auckland Thoroughbred Racing (ATR) is leading the march at the forefront of innovation. The club has adopted a level of professionalism that could only have been dreamed of at grassroots level even a few decades ago. The executive team has taken steps to ensure the longevity of the sport as one of Auckland's showcase attractions. Few events can compete with the atmosphere and festivities of an Ellerslie New Zealand Bloodstock Karaka Million or the tradition and sense of occasion of a Boxing Day meeting at the track. And the board has not only moved to protect the viability of the club long-term but also for it to flourish into the future.

The construction of the new StrathAyr track at Ellerslie has been a central focus and that is well documented through the pages of this publication. It will provide a dependable racing surface for years to come. The sale of the Ellerslie hill may have been a contentious issue a few years ago but that move has seen ATR create a fund that will see the club offer New Zealand's best prizemoney. The combination of those two ventures will attract the best horses and jockeys to the region, ensuring that Auckland will remain the benchmark in New Zealand racing for the foreseeable future.

But, as they say, a rising tide lifts all boats. Pukekohe Park has played an integral role in continuing racing in the region while Ellerslie has been out of play through the StrathAyr construction period — and it couldn't have played its part any better. The track there has provided a reliable racing surface for three of New Zealand's marquee days: the Boxing Day Races, New Zealand Bloodstock Karaka Million and Barfoot & Thompson Auckland Cup Day.

And exciting plans are on the horizon for the venue, which could soon see it become one of New Zealand's most desirable training facilities.

Behind the scenes, so much is being done to cultivate a new generation of racegoers, to expose New Zealand's most populous city to our great sport. We may lament a generation lost to racing: that we don't do racing like our parents and grandparents did. They routinely attended race meetings for the splendour of the occasion and for the love of the horse and the sport — and, of course, the punt. Racing failed to keep pace with its sporting competition and attendances fell. But there's a terrific article in this publication about what ATR is doing at the cutting edge of changing that culture and making a raceday an event that can't be missed. We want everyone to know that a raceday can be such an attractive entertainment option for such a wide range of racegoer. We'll all soon be attending Ellerslie meetings that capture the big-day buzz that's so prevalent at a carnival day in Sydney or Melbourne and you can read about how ATR is making that happen.

Read on because we've got industry and club profiles, a bit of history and don't forget your fashion fix: who doesn't appreciate a finely crafted fascinator? This is a magazine with it all. And it's hats — and fascinators — off to the team who have made it happen, led by ATR's executive general manager of marketing, Laura Madden. It's been my pleasure working with Laura to help put this publication together. I've learned plenty about what's going on with New Zealand's most progressive racing club — and I can't help feeling mighty impressed. 🐾





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A COMMENT FROM
AUCKLAND THOROUGHBRED RACING CHAIRMAN,

Doug Alderslade



As we eagerly look forward to a return to racing at Ellerslie, we feel we are on the cusp of a new and exciting era in New Zealand thoroughbred racing.

Five years ago, few would have doubted that the industry desperately needed a momentum shift for it to thrive in the future. Whilst the Messara Report was a significant catalyst for change nationally, the Auckland and the Counties Racing Clubs knew they had a unique opportunity to combine and reinvigorate racing in the Auckland region.

This called for bold and innovative decisions to be made to establish a sound financial base to provide the quantum shift needed to ensure the success of racing in Auckland which is often referred to as the headquarters of racing in New Zealand.

First and foremost is the plan to substantially increase prizemoney on offer at Ellerslie and Pukekohe Park. This is necessary to instil confidence in all participants in the industry. We have had feedback from a number of the industry's leading figures that they see this as one of the most positive signs in recent racing history.

The Club's goal is to see average stakes of \$100,000 at Auckland Thoroughbred Racing venues in due course with the stakes set to grow gradually over the next five years. Furthermore, it was pleasing to see further strides in this area industry wide with the recently announced \$20.3 million stakes increase by New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing (NZTR) for the upcoming 2023/24 season.

It is important to note that the figures presented by NZTR as a result of this \$20.3 million increase will see a further uplift for ATR races with our own stakes contribution soon to be announced.

To match the increased prizemoney, we needed a world class racing surface to showcase our world class product. The StrathAyr track will be a revelation to racegoers and will enable us to market our racing to overseas jurisdictions such as Australia and Asia.

We are also very conscious of our responsibility to support and encourage existing and new trainers to

train their horses in the Auckland region. Hence, we have plans to substantially upgrade and expand the training facilities at Pukekohe Park. The majority of horse owners love the animal, so we feel it important to enable them to be able to readily access and see their horses in training.

Commensurate with the increased prizemoney and new racing surface at Ellerslie, the time was right to launch a new brand for Auckland Thoroughbred Racing encapsulating the optimism we have for the future of racing. As well as a fresh new brand we look forward to welcoming racegoers back to Ellerslie to enjoy an enhanced raceday experience. In an ever-increasing competitive leisure market, we are determined to provide an environment and facilities which people will really appreciate and enjoy.

A day at the races is a truly enjoyable experience. The glamour, the social interaction, the horses, the colour, the fun and the excitement of the race. It is a unique package, and we are really looking forward to people being back oncourse at Ellerslie.

In the merger discussions between Auckland Racing Club and Counties Racing Club we were very conscious of the opportunity to play a leading role in taking, not only Auckland racing, but also the nation's racing into a new and prosperous era. We set ourselves a number of goals, some of which have been outlined in terms of stakes, new track and improved facilities. We are equally eager for other clubs and regions to seize the opportunities available to them and contribute in their own ways to ensure the success of racing into the future.

Racing is a great industry comprising numerous sectors of committed individuals who love the horses and the racing. We owe it to ourselves to combine and cooperate to ensure that generations to come can enjoy the industry as we do. 🐾

“INCREASED STAKES ARE SUCH
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THAN WHETHER THEY ARE
TRALIA.”

— Shaun Clotworthy, President of the
New Zealand Trainers' Association, and a
thoroughbred trainer in the Auckland area.





NEW CLUB,
NEW TRACK,
NEW FUTURE



There's no denying that the StrathAyr track at Ellerslie has been a topic of many conversations over the past 18 months, and even more articles, but as time has passed, there's also been some mystery about what exactly a StrathAyr track is.

Is it synthetic? Is it grass?
And most of all, why this product
and why now?

So, we're about to demystify the
track upgrade, making sure you're
completely 'au fait' with all things
track before we return to racing.

Let's start with the basics.

WHAT IS A STRATHAYR TRACK?

A StrathAyr track is a grass track with a mesh, sand and peat moss component that provides superior drainage and gives consistent racing conditions year-round. It's not a synthetic track and could perhaps be best described as an 'Engineered Profile Turf'. According to Andrew F. Clarke, a well known veterinarian in Australia, the engineered profile turf (EPT) natural turf track is a long-life, all-weather, low-maintenance, turf technology that incorporates mesh elements into the growing medium of which StrathAyr is one of the leading suppliers of.

SO WHY DID ELLERSLIE CHOOSE STRATHAYR?

The StrathAyr Track System was developed after 25 years of research and has been proven to give consistent racing conditions in all weather (and after the summer we've just had, there couldn't be a better time for this to be installed!).

Some of the best-known examples of StrathAyr tracks are Sha Tin (home of December's Hong Kong International Raceday) and Happy Valley Racetracks in Hong Kong, Kranji Racecourse in Singapore and Moonee Valley in Melbourne (home of Cox Plate Day).

Moonee Valley Racing Club (MVRC) was one of the early adopters of the StrathAyr track solution and in 2015, some 20 years after the installation, MVRC chief executive Michael Browell was quoted as saying

that he was unaware of any meetings being lost through rain in that time and said even though Melbourne was not subjected to the tropical-type rain received in other parts of Australia, it was still a phenomenal record.

"It's 20 years old, but the track here is still outstanding. We're rapt with it," Browell said at the time.

StrathAyr General Manager Frank Casimaty concurs saying, "Whilst there may have been cancellations on a StrathAyr Track System due to wet weather, by and large these are a result of other negative impacts such as visibility.

"We custom-design each track's drainage system to cope with local climatic conditions, which helps to prevent track closures due to weather"

A compelling statement at a time where New Zealand racing is being struck by abandonments on a more frequent basis than ever before.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE OTHER BENEFITS?

There are plenty of other benefits above and beyond the ability to withstand wet weather say the StrathAyr team. The tracks are reported to have a longer life span than standard turf tracks due to the ReFlex® mesh elements, which help the turf to resist compaction and provides a greater extended life of the rootzone profile, meaning turf is healthier, recovers from damage faster and looks thick and lush year-round. A study by Andrew Clarke showed that for traditional turf tracks, the lifespan is between 7 and 15 years, whereas, in the case of the EPT system tracks, the lifespan has been projected out to 30 years.

"A StrathAyr track can also sustain more racing as it has high load bearing capabilities, a quality drainage system and can cope with all weather conditions.

It also resists damage better and recovers faster than traditional turf,” says Frank Casimaty.

“But perhaps the most important benefit of a StrathAyr track is that the ReFlex® mesh technology, which ensures our tracks have greater surface uniformity and cushion impact, lowering injury potential for horses,” he says.

Several international studies support StrathAyr’s claims, showing that EPT tracks have some of the lowest rates of raceday fatalities and injuries of horses in the world.

And furthermore, in an industry where we are very reliant on funds from the wagering public, consistency of surface can only be a good thing.

ARE THERE ANY CHALLENGES?

ATR Track Manager Jason Fulford does caution that the StrathAyr track isn’t without its challenges and that its maintenance is slightly different to a standard grass surface.

“It will take a more frequent, rigorous routine to keep it in top shape. It’s a different type of maintenance with keen attention to detail required for things like weeds and fungus. As a track manager, it’s something I’m nervous but excited to tackle,” he says.

StrathAyr too say that the management is different to that of a standard grass track, but say the profile is very water, fertiliser, and labour efficient when managed in accordance with the StrathAyr guidelines.

AND FINALLY, WHY NOW?

The installation of the StrathAyr track was one of several measures agreed to after the merger of Auckland Racing Club and Counties Racing Club into Auckland Thoroughbred Racing.

Readers might recall that it wasn’t too long ago that Ellerslie embarked on a smaller track project with ATR CEO Paul Wilcox saying, “our earlier project was largely an interim solution to give us time to consider all options and evaluate the Club’s goals in order to make the right decision as to the direction of the improvements”.

“It’s no secret that abandonments and track safety have become of greater concern in recent years, and this is our opportunity to provide New Zealand racing with a high quality surface that will go the distance.”



Top: Ellerslie Racecourse under construction in January 2023

Above: Moonee Valley racetrack
Credit: SDP Media



HOW DOES THE REFLEX® MESH ACTUALLY WORK?*

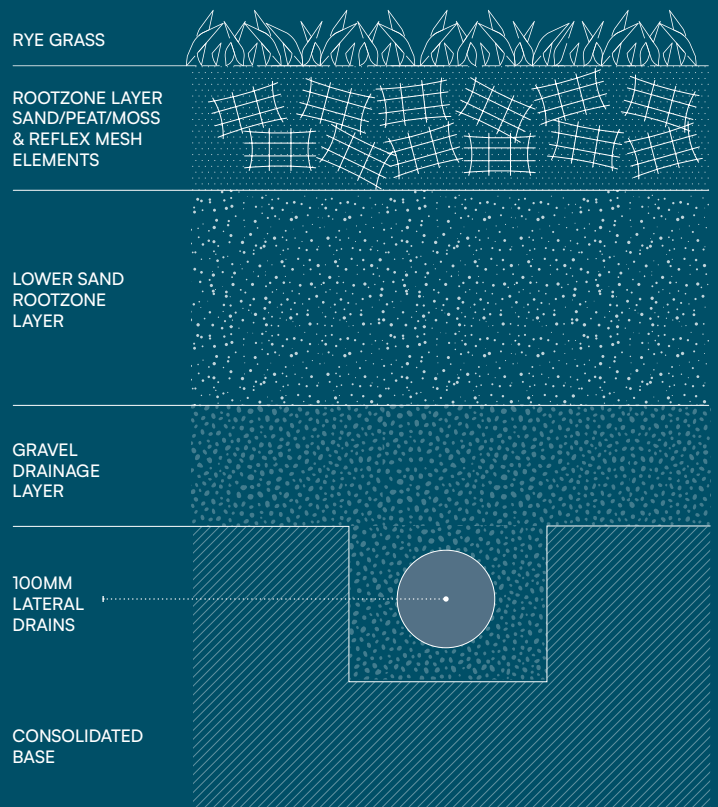
StrathAyr explains...

Soil particles interlock with the mesh, packing into the mesh apertures to form a soil/mesh cluster. These clusters then interlock to form a stable composite rootzone matrix.

When this rootzone matrix is compressed by horses, the mesh elements provide a dual effect.

1. It acts like thousands of springs, flexing vertically as the load is applied to the surface and returning to their original form after the load is released.
2. At the same time the applied load compresses the soil within the mesh apertures causing them to expand laterally. As the load is removed, the apertures shrink back elastically and the surface profile recovers.

This combined mesh-flexing and elastic-straining of the apertures provides unique impact absorption and surface recovery properties.



*DIAGRAM NOT TO SCALE



Ellerslie Racecourse
in May 2023

READ | To read more about
the track project, click to view
our "Keeping Track" series.

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WHAT'S TO COME
FOR THE
2023/24
SEASON



There's nothing more thrilling than a day spent trackside. With Ellerslie and Pukekohe Park set to host some of New Zealand's most iconic racedays this season, we can't wait to welcome you oncourse.



MELBOURNE CUP DAY

Tuesday 7 November
Pukekohe Park

It's the race that's stops two nations and we'll be watching the scenes from Flemington at the next best thing, Melbourne Cup Day at Pukekohe Park.

This raceday has become one of Auckland's mainstay events on the first Tuesday in November and when you combine great hospitality with live horse racing (a thrill offered nowhere else in the city), you're on to a winner.

With the iconic Lexus Melbourne Cup also shown live on the big screen, join us in cheering on our Kiwi hopefuls over the ditch too — here's hoping we witness the next Verry Elleegant!

COUNTIES CUP DAY

Saturday 25 November
Pukekohe Park

Counties Cup Day is Franklin's original thoroughbred racing event. The day offers top-tier racing as well as quite the party. It is good vibes personified and the event is one Pukekohe won't want to miss.

When the horses take to the track you can expect to see an exciting race card, featuring the Group 2 Dunstan Feeds Auckland Thoroughbred Breeders' Stakes, the Group 3 Counties Cup and the Group 3 Counties Bowl.

The Counties Cup can claim some memorable moments with a dead heat and several 'three-peats' in the record books. What will 2023 bring?

BOXING DAY RACES

Tuesday 26 December
Pukekohe Park

Auckland's iconic occasion is returning to Pukekohe Park for the final time.

High-octane racing, hospitality & family entertainment combine to bring you the perfect way to celebrate the summer break.

For those with children in tow, free General Admission and activities for the kids make attending a 'no brainer' with plenty on offer throughout the day to keep them entertained between races.

The quality of racing is top tier, with the day set to add to Pukekohe Park's elite race tally with the Group 1 Cambridge Stud Zabeel Classic and the Group 2 Hallmark Stud Eight Carat Classic headlining a 10 racecard.



WATCH | Click here to check out a highlights reel of our premier racedays. It will make you long for summer to arrive, that's for sure!



NEW YEAR'S DAY RACES

Monday 1 January
Pukekohe Park

What better way to dust off the night before than by joining us trackside for what will be Pukekohe's final iconic raceday of the season.

The quality of racing on this night is arguably some of the best on the calendar with (deep breath now...) the Group 1 Sistema Railway, Group 2 Eclipse Stakes, Group 2 Royal Stakes, Group 2 Auckland Guineas, Group 2 Rich Hill Mile and Group 3 City of Auckland Cup. I mean, do we need to say more?

The Group 1 Sistema Railway headlines this incredible line-up and with recent winners Imperatriz, Entriviere and Avantage all piloted by Opie Bosson, will we see him take out his 4th win in a row in 2024? Could it even set the scene for his 100th Group 1 win? Time will tell, but it's one not to be missed.

TAB KARAKA MILLIONS

Saturday 27 January
Ellerslie (tentative)

This is it. The one we've all been waiting for.

All going well with the track upgrade, the TAB Karaka Millions will be Ellerslie's first big hurrah after the StrathAyr track installation and boy are we excited.

As if the evening couldn't get more exciting, we've got, in addition to the return to Ellerslie, the \$1m Karaka Million 2YO and the \$1.5m Karaka Million 3YO Classic, there's an all-new additional \$1m race for 4YOs, musical guests set to start the party the right way plus a supporting race card consisting entirely of Group racing.

The glamour night on New Zealand's racing calendar, it's the night where the who's who of the racing scene rub shoulders with Auckland's social set and we predict the night will be like nothing we've seen before.

AUCKLAND CUP WEEK®

Ellerslie

DERBY DAY

Saturday 2 March

BARFOOT & THOMPSON AUCKLAND CUP DAY

Saturday 9 March

New Zealand's most prestigious racing carnival, Auckland Cup Week®, returns to Ellerslie Racecourse in March 2024.

With world-class horses running for valuable purses, the colour and pageantry of racing fashion on display, free children's entertainment and the finest food and champagne being enjoyed by racegoers mixing and mingling trackside, it's what racing in New Zealand is all about.

The week features the \$1 million Group 1 New Zealand Derby, the Group 1 Sistema Stakes, the Group 1 Bonecrusher New Zealand Stakes and the big race with the impressive silverware, the Group 2 Barfoot & Thompson Auckland Cup. In addition to this stellar line up of racing, the week plays host to the national fashions in the field final — The Ned Prix de Fashion; live music (with some BIG names set to join us); and a raft of other races & entertainment in support.



SEASON



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PUKEKOHE PARK

JOINS ELITE GROUP

AIDAN RODLEY



Premier races need a premium venue. The best of those races bear status as Group One races. New Zealand currently runs 20 Group One races during a season. That number has fluctuated since the inception of the Group and Listed race classification was introduced in the 1978/79 season as a means of upholding the quality of breeding and racing standards, a way of benchmarking the quality of performances in New Zealand's premier races.

In that time 906 races have been run at Group One level in New Zealand, nearly one-third of those run at undeniably New Zealand's premier track, Ellerslie. It may not have registered at the time but when Coventina Bay won the 2022 Bonecrusher New Zealand Stakes at Ellerslie in March last year, she was winning the 300th Group One race run at Auckland Thoroughbred Racing's headquarters. Some of New Zealand's greatest horses sit among those to have won an Ellerslie Group One race, taking their place in turf history as a result.

But with each season comes a new crop of stars.

And last season there was a new Group One performer making all the right headlines — Pukekohe Park. A venue with a proud legacy going back more than 100 years, Pukekohe Park hosted its historic first Group One race in the 2022/23 season. With Ellerslie out of action through the construction of its new StrathAyr track, new venues had to be sought for its premier days. Hamilton's Te Rapa racecourse benefited through the hosting of New Year's Day racing, which featured the Group 1 Sistema Railway, and it was also the venue for the 2023 Group 1 Auckland Thoroughbred Racing New Zealand Derby in March.

But on Boxing Day 2022, Pukekohe Park hosted the Group 1 Cambridge Stud Zabeel Classic, becoming just the 13th New Zealand racetrack to hold a Group One race. South African jockey Warren Kennedy didn't miss his chance to grab a slice of history, claiming his first New Zealand Group One win with a well-executed ride on the Graham Richardson and Rogan Norvall-trained Defibrillate (pictured).

By the end of the season, Pukekohe Park was an old hand at hosting Group One racing, having held four elite races: the Cambridge Stud Zabeel Classic,

the Sistema Stakes, the Bonecrusher New Zealand Stakes and also the New Zealand Thoroughbred Breeders' Stakes, transferred from Te Aroha, which like Ellerslie was out of action through track renovation.

The significance of Pukekohe Park becoming a Group One venue was not lost on club members, past and present and the Auckland Thoroughbred Racing team took great pride in how well the Pukekohe track performed in its role as super-sub.

ATR chairman Doug Alderslade was on course to soak up the festival atmosphere on these feature occasions. "Justifiably the Pukekohe faithfuls were able to puff their chest out and show they were equally able to showcase the best racing on the best days. There was a real sense of pride locally, which we shared in, in terms of being able to showcase Pukekohe and what it's capable of doing," Alderslade says.

The move of marquee Auckland Thoroughbred Racing meetings to Pukekohe Park was a show of faith the club had in the venue.

"We didn't set out to do this but it was one of the ways we could show there were equal players in the merger," Alderslade says.

"With Ellerslie being out of action, to be able to showcase some the biggest races on the New Zealand calendar at Pukekohe Park was terrific and the support we got from the community was wonderful.

"The racing surface was terrific too and the feedback we got from the trainers and jockeys was that it was a success.

"Counties Racing Club was always known as an innovator, going back to the \$30,000 days and the buzz they created. They were big occasions and Counties led the way in that respect.

**"Hosting the Group One days
this season was a way of bringing
back the mana associated with
Pukekohe Park."**

HOST VENUES OF

NEW ZEALAND'S
906
GROUP 1 RACES

Ellerslie – 300 · Trentham – 220 · Riccarton – 99
Te Rapa – 82 · Hastings – 55 · Otaki – 54 · Awapuni – 45
Avondale – 29 · Te Aroha – 15 · Pukekohe – 4
Levin – 1 · Wanganui – 1 · Matamata – 1

PUKEKOHE
PARK

Group One Races

RACE	DISTANCE	WINNER	WINNING TRAINER	WINNING JOCKEY	TIME
Cambridge Stud Zabeel Classic	2050m	Defibrillate	Graham Richardson & Rogan Norvall	Warren Kennedy	2:05.37
Sistema Stakes	1200m	Ulanova (promoted)	Stephen Marsh	Craig Grylls	1:11.27
Bonecrusher New Zealand Stakes	2050m	Prowess	Roger James & Robert Wellwood	Michael McNab	2:06.53
NZ Thoroughbred Breeders' Stakes	1600m	Belclare	Lisa Latta	Sam Spratt	1:35.08



CLINK!

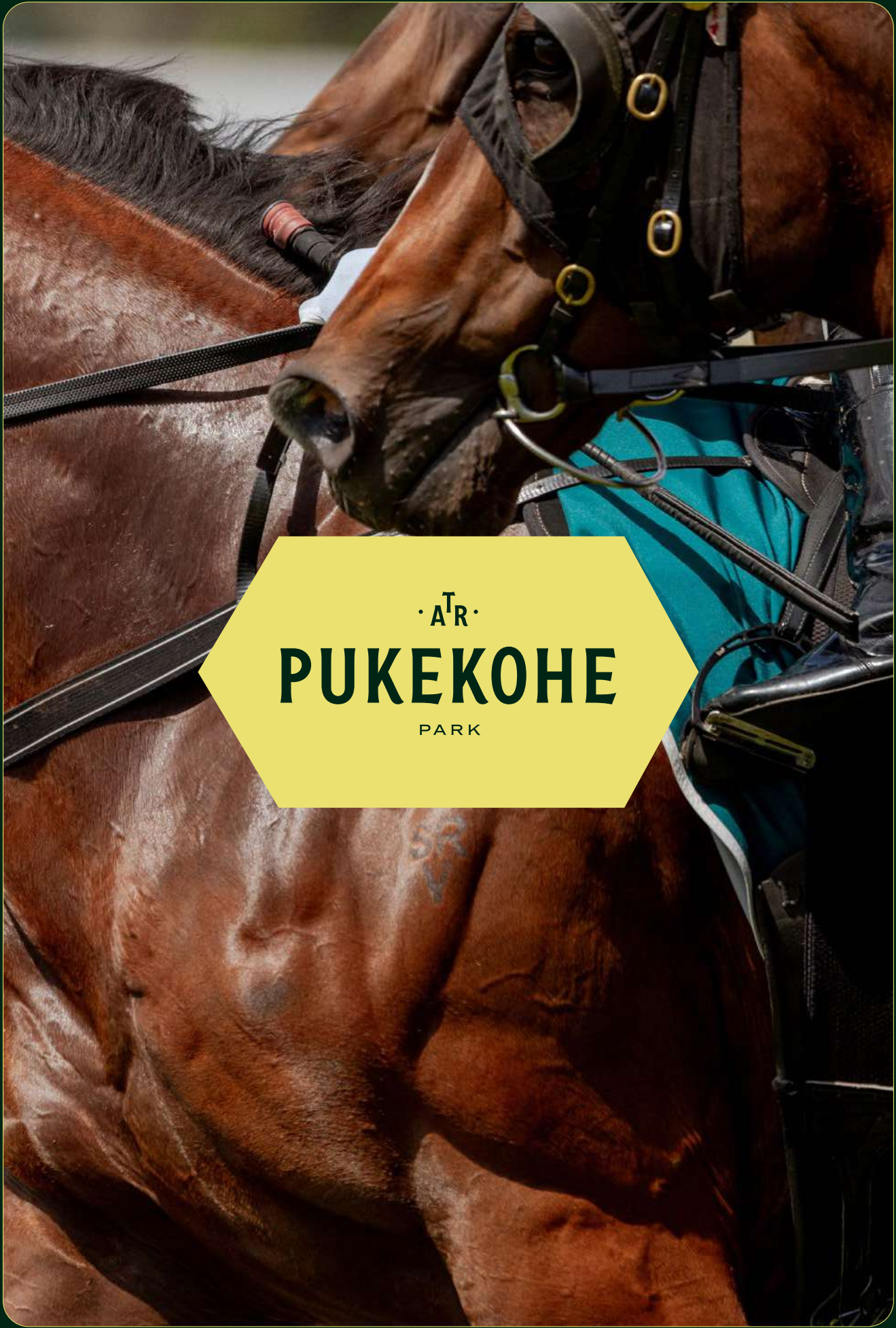




“ATR IS A CLUB KNOWN FOR ITS PROFESSIONALISM AND ALSO ITS FORESIGHT, AND THE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO THE ELLERSLIE TRACK, TOGETHER WITH THE OUTSTANDING INCREASE IN STAKE MONEY TO BE OFFERED, WILL HAVE A MAJOR IMPACT. TE AKAU RACING CANNOT WAIT TO SEE OUR TANGERINE COLOURS RETURN TO NEW ZEALAND RACING’S HEADQUARTERS.”

David Ellis CNZM, Te Akau Racing principal





·A^TR·

PUKEKOHE

PARK



When one door closes, another opens.

Change has been the only constant at Pukekohe Park for the past few years but the most exciting developments are yet to come, according to Auckland Thoroughbred Racing (ATR) deputy chairman Mark Chitty.

It's like a quickfire evolution is happening at the track, the former home to the Counties Racing Club before the 2021 merger to form Auckland Thoroughbred Racing. Chitty was Counties Racing Club chairman at the time of the merger and he has watched over a remarkable period in Pukekohe racing: the end of an era, the beginning of a new one, a transition phase where Pukekohe has taken on hosting duties of key Group One dates while Ellerslie is out of action with the construction of its new StrathAyr track and the planning of a significant new development of the course that should see it become an important training venue for Auckland racing in the future. And that's all happened within the space of the last three years.

"It's an exciting new era. We can see an uplift and it's going to benefit everyone who's involved," Chitty says.

For Chitty, each step has been a key part of Pukekohe Park's pathway towards finding its place within the Auckland Thoroughbred Racing spectrum. He recalls that getting Club members on board with the merger wasn't initially smooth-sailing but the Board was determined to proceed with changes for the better of racing in the region.

"We went through a really good process. People were always going to be concerned. We celebrated 100 years as Counties Racing Club and the next year we didn't exist," Chitty says.

"It was quite a hurdle and it required Club members to really buy into that. But we understood where the game needed to go. Most people who played any sort of part in the management of the club had been around horses, either as an owner, trainer, breeder or whatever and they understood we needed a game changer."

A key mindshift change was getting away from old racing club models which relied on volunteers doing their best for the organisation despite shortfalls in areas of expertise to running the club more professionally with specialists in all facets of the business.

"Pukekohe Park is going to play a really important role in ATR. We're a club with two racetracks," Chitty says.

"Once the StrathAyr is completed, Pukekohe still has a critical role to play in the development of horses heading to that next level. I liken it to club rugby. We'll have our big day in the sun with Counties Cup Day but then we're providing the venue that springboards the next stars on to Super Rugby and test level, which is Ellerslie. We're a city track and a country track."

HORSES THUN O THE START THER AWAR E

Last season Pukekohe Park took on a greater role, hosting three of the club's marquee days usually reserved for Ellerslie. Boxing Day saw Pukekohe host the Cambridge Stud Zabeel Classic, its first ever Group One race, before the party of the New Zealand Bloodstock Karaka Million in January and Barfoot & Thompson Auckland Cup Day in March, which also featured the Group One Bonecrusher New Zealand Stakes and the Group One Sistema Stakes.

“The Group Ones and the Karaka Million races are just the elite races. We’ve never had them before and to pay credit to our track people – to Jason Fulford, Emery White and the team – this track has had 18 months of preparation and it’s played superbly,” Chitty says.

“Participants have had confidence in the track and people have been able to enjoy the racing for what it was worth and that’s largely because of the work done on the track. The Karaka Million meeting has been New Zealand’s biggest growth day over the past decade and to have that at Pukekohe Park and seeing people embrace it like they did was incredible really.”

With his ATR hat on, Chitty says hosting Group One racing at Pukekohe was just one facet of providing a

service to the industry while Ellerslie was out of play through the StrathAyr construction. But he wholly understands the significance of the occasion and what that meant to long-standing supporters of the club.

“For us, it was part of the process. But for the families that have been very much part of the Franklin Racing Club and the Counties Racing Club, that was a dream come true. And they turned up for those days. On Boxing Day, old Counties Racing Club members turned up in the Fulton Lounge in their hundreds,” Chitty says.

“As part of the merger, there was talk that there would be no racing at Pukekohe Park and that was just one of those things that we had to overcome. But for all that trepidation, those old members just loved it. It felt like: here we are, we’ve supported this club over so many years and now we get to see Group One racing here.”

Chitty says developing Pukekohe Park as a training and racing venue is one of three key strategies Auckland Thoroughbred Racing was launched on and motor racing at Pukekohe Park has ceased as the club looked to focus on its core role of thoroughbred racing.



Planning is already well underway for Pukekohe Park to become a premium training venue with scope to have up to 400 horses trained at the track. The club is awaiting council resource consent before beginning that work. In the meantime, work is continuing to improve the course proper and training tracks.

“We’ve got a good variety of tracks already here and I believe when we begin racing for the stakes that will be on offer at Ellerslie, it’s going to be an attractive option to be training at Pukekohe Park in such close proximity. And the new motorway has made travel to Waikato that much easier too.

“We’d like to see 300 to 400 horses trained here but that will be in due process. I’d like to see us attracting a younger brigade of trainers that aren’t necessarily rooted to another part of the country.”

Chitty would love to see Pukekohe play a role in providing racing career pathways for young Aucklanders, perhaps unearthing the next Chris Waller or James McDonald from their grounding at the track.

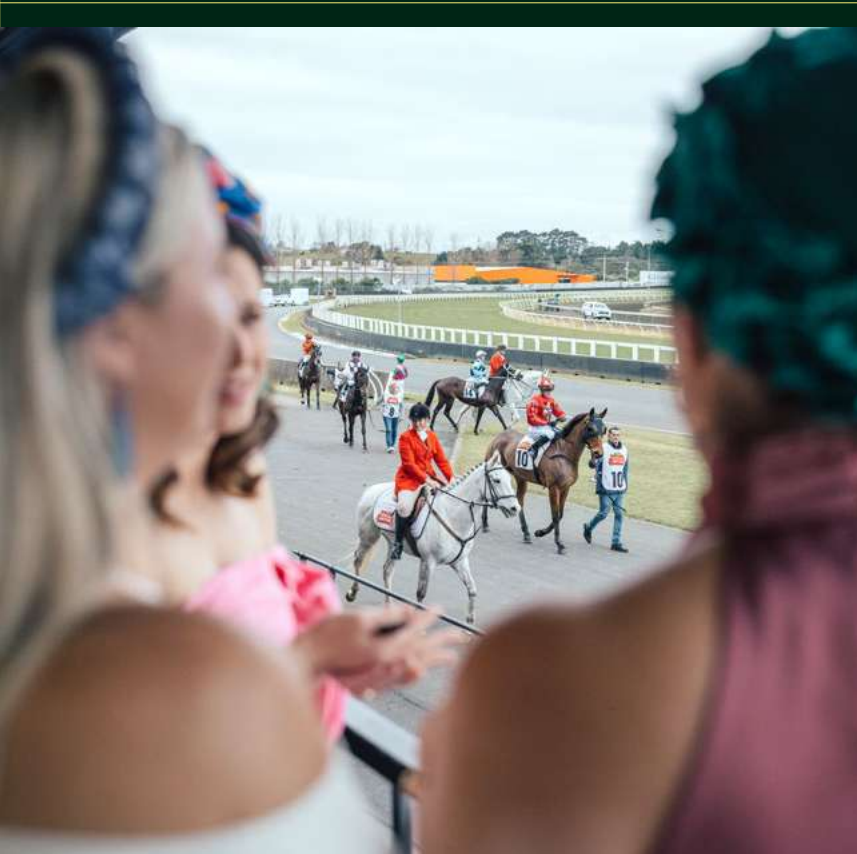
He has been part of ATR delegations on two trips to Australia, as well as Matamata, Cambridge and South

Auckland’s Byerley Park along with pre-training stables to understand what facilities work best and what trainers want most from them.

“We’d like to be able to create a destination. We need to create a bit of uniqueness to Pukekohe Park and have it not all about the increased stakes at Ellerslie too.”

It all ladders back to the ATR mantra of striving to achieve what’s best for racing in the region. Throughout our interview, Chitty repeatedly sings the praises of ATR board members and their understanding of the job at hand.

“There’s been a lot of people do a lot of work. What I really like about ATR is that we’ve not been afraid to take on people who excel in areas where other people don’t. The property realisation and development masterplan is specific stuff. It’s something I don’t know a lot about. I’m the person on the board who brings that racing background. I’ve lived racing and I know what’s gone on in the past and can help advise them on what might drive participation. But we’ve got finance guys and guys who have that specialised knowledge.




·ATR·
PUKEKOHE
PARK

“What I like is how it’s being run as a business. The Auckland Racing Club were on that pathway anyway and with the Counties Racing Club coming on board, it feels like we’ve doubled down. We’re twice as big and we’re able to manoeuvre accordingly. Even with the business backgrounds, everyone on the board has been in and around racing too. History is to be respected but it shouldn’t rule our future. The Counties Racing Club is no more but really it’s just grown into something bigger and that’s the exciting thing.”

It’s been a hectic three years of club involvement for Chitty but it’s clear he’s enjoying the ride. The success of Pukekohe Park hosting those marquee racedays was particularly satisfying, especially allaying any fears that members might have had that the track might not have been up to the job.

“Not being able to race at Ellerslie and all that racing coming to Pukekohe Park gave everyone a lot of confidence in the track. You could just see it with some of our members who hadn’t been to Pukekohe a lot in the past. They were like ‘we’ve got a really good country track here.’”

But while he has a healthy respect for racing history in the area, Chitty is never one to get bogged down in the past and his focus is firmly on the future.

“The job’s not over. We’ve got some major hurdles in front of us but there are some great people sitting around that ATR table. We’ve set ourselves some lofty goals but they needed to happen. There’s still a lot of water to go under the bridge but we’re getting there.” 



WATCH | [Click here to see what Pukekohe Park has to offer.](#)



AUCKLAND THOROUGHBRED SINCE RACING 1874



Kennedy making himself right at home

AIDAN RODLEY

There's an underlying tenacity about South African jockey Warren Kennedy that says New Zealand has yet to see the best of him. The thoughtfully-spoken 43-year-old follows in the footsteps of several South African jockeys to have ridden here over the years but none left their home country with the success that he'd achieved. Kennedy caused a sensation in South African racing when he announced he was leaving for New Zealand at the end of the 2021/22 season.

For a jockey described as a journeyman for so many years, Kennedy had won his first South African national premiership as a 41-year-old then repeated the achievement the following season, only to quit his home country as the reigning champion. The motivation was two-fold: he had ambitions to become a champion jockey abroad but he also wanted a better life for his wife Barbara and their two young daughters. Among the places Kennedy sent his resume was New Zealand and former South African jockey Donovan Mansour was quick to reply, telling him this was the place to come. Kennedy's brother and sister had already immigrated here and after a reconnaissance visit, he decided to follow their lead. Breaking into the close-knit jockeys ranks is the first challenge for a foreign rider but Kennedy quickly won over his new Kiwi colleagues and it wasn't long before he won over New Zealand trainers, owners and punters with his skills in the saddle. His style might be considered unorthodox by New Zealand standards but it has been effective enough to see his first part-season here successful by any measure. He has claimed Group One success, won one of New Zealand's three \$1 million races (at the time) and filled a spot in the top five on the national premiership. It's a great start. But Kennedy is far from done even scratching the surface of what he wants to achieve here. That's par for the course for a jockey who has overcome many obstacles on his path to success, once even considered too small for a sport that demands many of its riders to starve themselves in order to participate.

Kennedy was born and grew up in Durban. His father Terrance was a small business owner and his mother Sandra worked for a packaging company. He enjoyed gymnastics, soccer and chess but because of his size, his teachers would frequently tell him he should consider a career as a jockey. His father had a brief career as a jockey but had never pushed his son in that direction. "I was always a sporty boy and I thought I'd give it a crack. I enjoyed it from the start," Kennedy says. He joined the jockey academy in Durban at 14 and began race riding in his third year, despite initial concerns he might not be big enough to be a jockey. He had undergone all the standard tests at the academy to weed out riders who might get too big but those weren't the main issue with Kennedy.

"I was actually too light. I weighed 26 kilos when I went in when I was 14 years old. In South Africa, we claim four kilograms as an apprentice and the bottom weight is 52, so you'd ride at 48. Deadweight on a horse is the saddle and a leadbag and the most (deadweight) you could carry was 13 kilos so to get rides was impossible. I was still nine kilos too light. The academy said because I was struggling to get bigger they wanted to give me steroid injections to pick up weight, which I refused.

They had an academy opening up in Port Elizabeth and they sent me down there and I was able to get heavier naturally. I hooked up with a trainer, Nic Claassen, and after three months, I became his number one jockey and away we went."

Kennedy returned to Durban at the completion of his apprenticeship, having claimed the national apprentice title in his final year, and set about making his way to the top of his sport as a senior jockey. But the pinnacle was still 20 years away. "It took a while and a lot of hard work. You've got to get noticed. You get an opportunity which might not seem like much at the time but you shine and it leads to better chances to climb up the ladder," Kennedy says. "I was riding winners but wasn't the name on everyone's lips. Then I joined Gavin Van Zyl's stable in Durban and became his stable jockey. We had a lot of success, won the Group One Thekwini Stakes on Gabor, and then became stable jockey for Johannesburg trainer Paul Peter. I kept flying up and riding a lot of winners for him. He broke the South African record for wins in a season in 2021. Once I had hooked up with him, it began a snowball effect and the rides started flowing. I was riding for bigger trainers and getting more wins." Kennedy claimed the first South African national premiership in 2020/21 then defended his title before making the shock announcement that he was moving to New Zealand.

"It was a tough decision because it had got to the stage where I could pick up the phone in South Africa and get any horse I wanted but I was looking for a new challenge," he says. "To win a premiership outside my home country would be a big thing but it was also for my family. Unfortunately South Africa as a country has really declined. I love the country but we wanted to get a passport for our children that really meant something."

Warren Kennedy aboard
Prowess triumphing in the
\$1m Karaka Million 3YO Classic





Left: Kennedy in South Africa, prior to his move to New Zealand (supplied)

Right: Family life with wife Barbara and their daughters Ryleigh and Jamie

Kennedy is a likeable bloke. There's no pretense about him; he's chatty and warm. It's easy to see why he was quick to disarm any initial resistance in New Zealand, which in turn has made his transition to life here seamless. "It's been great. It's always difficult coming to a new place and starting from scratch but I had a bit of a profile behind me and I got a lot of support early on from guys like Brendan and Jo Lindsay, Lance Noble, Peter and Dawn Williams — really good trainers that have backed me from the get-go and a lot of other trainers have followed suit. You've got to produce the goods to get the rides and I've been doing that so it has just snowballed from there," he says. "It's undoubtedly a change. Things are done differently from home. Nominations and those sort of things are all very different but I've had Donovan Mansour booking my rides and he's been a big help. We had trialling for a short while in my country but it never really caught on. But the racing side is still racing and you adapt to it. You know the spine of it and what needs to be done." Kennedy credits Mansour for opening doors for him in New Zealand and says he is indebted to Byerley Park owner Daniel Nakhle, who has been one of his biggest supporters. "Daniel promoted me a lot. There was a lot of hype for me when I arrived so people were aware who I was and I got fair enough rides when I first got here," he says.

"It all changes when you start winning. You pick up better rides and when I won on them and won a few Listed races, people see you can do the job and accept you and are willing to put you on."

One of the most challenging aspects of riding in New Zealand for Kennedy was adapting to the tracks. In South Africa, he rode chiefly at eight racecourses that he got to know intimately but he concedes it has taken time to get to grips with nuances of New Zealand tracks. "The courses were at first a bit of a challenge to me: tighter tracks, shorter straights, no false rail. You have to adapt to riding that way," he says. "Back home, you could ride a bit more of a relaxed race because you come into the straight and you know you've still got a long way to go and with the false rail, you know you are going to get space for your horse. Here, you've got to start looking for space on the bend at some of those courses. It was a bit of a challenge but I'm getting there. I won't say I've got it done yet but I'm getting there."

It's that attitude that has made Kennedy so popular. His first season here has been a spectacular success. In the space of eight months, he had already won more than 65 races to sit fourth on the national premiership with stakes earnings of \$3 million. He is striking at better than one win in every seven rides.



Boxing Day success in the Group 1 Cambridge Stud Zabeel Classic (2050m) aboard Defibrillate at Pukekohe, the ninth Group One win of his career, was a precursor to winning the \$1 million Karaka Million 3YO Classic (1600m) on Prowess at the same track, among eight black-type wins for the season. “You win races like that and people get the confidence to put you on in other big races. Once those two got ticked off, it’s really cracked on,” Kennedy says. “You always want to improve yourself and do the best you can. That’s your obligation as a jockey to the owners and trainers that put you on these horses. They’ve got the faith in you to do the best job possible and get the best result possible for the horse. You’re always striving to better yourself but any sportsman wants to achieve better results and get better — that’s human nature. To come in and make a big splash was something I had set myself a goal of doing. And it’s easy to enjoy somewhere new when you are doing as well as I have. But I knew it was something I would have to stick things out with. The harder you work, the more opportunities come your way and if you shine in those opportunities, people notice.

“I’ve been lucky that people have noticed and I’m doing well. I’m really happy with the start I’ve made. Trainers in New Zealand have been really accommodating to give me a chance and I’m lucky that I’ve landed running.”

One venue Kennedy has made his own is Pukekohe Park. His first 86 rides at the track yielded 24 wins and 17 placings. “I feel I know the course really well. It is more like the South African courses because it’s spacious and has a long straight so it was easy to feel at home there and I was able to adapt to it very quickly. It seems whenever I go there, I’ve been able to get a winner or two so it’s hard not to love the course when that’s happening,” Kennedy says, adding that he can’t wait for his opportunity to ride at Ellerslie for the first time when it reopens midway through the new season. “I’ve heard from numerous people that I’ll love Ellerslie. They’ve said if you love riding Pukekohe, you’ll love Ellerslie so I’m excited to get there and to race on it. I haven’t been there yet but from what I’ve heard and the replays I’ve watched, it seems like a thinking jockey’s track, which will suit me down to the ground.”

Kennedy has made the move to New Zealand with his wife of four years, Barbara, and their daughters Jamie, 4, and Ryleigh, 2. Barbara, whom Kennedy had first met during his apprenticeship in her home town of Port Elizabeth, had trained a team of up to 30 horses at Summerveld, near Durban, before they moved and she intends training in New Zealand when the time’s right. “I’m enjoying being here but I need to start doing something myself too,” she says. “I just need to learn the ins and outs of racing here. I’ve been helping Peter Williams out at the trials but it is a goal of mine to have my own yard here. My happy place is being at the yard with the horses.”



The Kennedys are living in Karaka, where they have already found a sense of home, even the girls. “They moan a bit about the rain but otherwise they are really happy. They love their kindly. It’s been great for them.” One of the main contrasts from home is morning trackwork. Riding work at Summerveld, Kennedy would ride up to 25 horses a morning, each mount having already been warmed up for him so he could just focus on the gallop. “Here, you ride them right from the tie-ups. You’ve got to take them around and trot them and work them and bring them back. It takes time to work a horse so you don’t get through as many. Here it’s more relaxed. You maybe work eight horses in a morning and it’s not really hard work but it’s a lot more time you’re with a horse than what you would be in South Africa.”

It hasn’t been plain sailing for Kennedy to get to where he has in the sport. He has suffered his share of broken bones, including breaking his nose on five separate occasions. He was lucky to survive an horrific fall at Port Elizabeth that saw him suffer serious head injuries leading to three months on the sidelines and the lasting reminder of a menacing scar across his head. “It’s a dangerous sport and anything can happen. In my mind is that I’ve got two kids and a wife at home but you can’t think like that. You’ve just got to go and do your thing and take all the necessary

precautions that you always do in a race. It’s about foresight and paying attention to things happening around you. Freak accidents happen but that can happen driving your car too. As long as my body can handle it. I’ve got no weight issues and as long as I can still get on a horse and ride competitively, I’ll do it.” It’s clear family is a priority for Kennedy and when quizzed on what motivates him, it’s an easy answer. “My kids. I just want to give them the best, to give them everything I didn’t have growing up. I guess every parent feels the same way. I just want them to have great lives. I want Barbara to be happy. I want to live somewhere where we feel safe and can do something we want when we want. Unfortunately South Africa wasn’t providing that for us. We’ve come here and it’s been great. It’s nice and relaxed here. It’s pretty easy to be honest.” And already the racing bug has taken hold at home. “Jamie has already got her jockey seat down on her rocking horse, which is a bit of a worry. She rides it and shouts me home on the TV. They go to the course and they enjoy it there so it’s hard for them not to get into it. I won’t push them there. I wouldn’t recommend it for them but if it’s what makes them happy, that’s what will make me happy in the end.”

A big factor in Kennedy’s contentment in New Zealand is how well he has fitted in. He has already made firm friendships in the jockeys’ room. “When I first got



Kennedy is a natural lightweight, walking at 51kg, a key asset for his quest to win a New Zealand premiership, a goal he'd love to achieve in the near future. But as he prepares for the new season, Kennedy is happy to reflect on a job well done so far: a splendid transition into the New Zealand jockey ranks.



here, the guys were really good. I can understand how they must have felt with a foreign jockey coming in, an outsider, but all the senior guys were really welcoming and that just flowed down the ranks," he says. "Once the senior guys are chatty with you, the juniors see you've been accepted and accept you too. I've made friends with the guys really quickly. We'll fly to another centre to ride and they'll say jump in the car and come to the course with us. There's a lot of camaraderie in New Zealand, a lot of friendships." With Kennedy's arrival here came the talking point on his unique style. He has adopted more of a bustling European style of riding than the compact style most Kiwi jockeys use. "It's a style that suits me. A lot of young kids have asked me about it and I've said 'you'll learn your fundamentals and your basics on how to sit on a horse, how to balance and how to ride out a finish but you've got to adapt your style to what suits you and what you feel comfortable with'. You can't just copy other jockeys because what they do might not work for you. I've found what works for me. Opie Bosson did say to me one day after I'd ridden a winner at Tauranga 'gee, you bounce on them but when you bounce on them, it looks like they lift for you' and I said 'well, most of them do and that's the aim'. Everyone respects each other's riding styles; that's just the way you ride and that's it."

Kennedy is a natural lightweight, walking at 51kg, a key asset for his quest to win a New Zealand premiership, a goal he'd love to achieve in the near future. But as he prepares for the new season, Kennedy is happy to reflect on a job well done so far: a splendid transition into the New Zealand jockey ranks.

"Winning the Karaka Million on Prowess has been a highlight. It was a well-thought-out race and everything went to plan. And to watch her go to Australia and win was great too. It's great to see horses reach the potential you think they have. The money was great too but for me it's more about winning the big races and that's where the big money is. But you can work with a difficult maiden and get that past the line and that can be every bit as good a feeling," he says. "I'm not getting any younger and I'd love to win a premiership here while I can. I've been building relationships and I'd like to have a go at it. I have moved to New Zealand to spend more time with my family but to get one would be a huge tick. And I'd love to ride in Australia and Japan at some point, though I'd just want to fly in and out. If the right opportunity came for the right horse in South Africa, I'd probably go back and ride. But my heart isn't set on it. Family comes before that now. I want to make New Zealand my home. We're in the mindset that this is a permanent move. Hopefully that works out." So far, so good.



FOR THE LOVE OF THE HORSE

At the very heart of our industry is a raft of participants whose main motivation is simply the love of the horse.

When viewed dispassionately, the commitment expected by those in the industry is simply not an appealing career prospect. The early hours, long days and lack of free weekends and public holidays doesn't present a compelling picture. It can be a challenging job yet without these people whose alarms go off when others are heading to bed, the industry as we know it would cease to function.

The 'unsung heroes' of the track, the caregivers and the faces behind the scenes — the passion these individuals show is to be admired and we, here at Auckland Thoroughbred Racing, know that behind every successful thoroughbred is the commitment and care, the 3am starts, and the attention to every little detail that adds up to a trip to the winner's circle. And it's our goal to match the dedication shown to each racehorse with the effort we put in to providing the best possible raceday experience, for everyone oncourse.

The 2022/23 season saw a raft of memorable thoroughbreds etch their names in the history books

but few could compete with the triumphs of Prowess. Trained by Roger James and Robert Wellwood, the 3YO filly crossed the line first in the 2023 Karaka Million 3YO Classic and then went on to win the Group 1 Bonecrusher New Zealand Stakes with both races taking place at Pukekohe Park. She then proved herself on the Australian stage with her efforts in the Group 1 Vinery Stud Stakes at Rosehill before heading home for a well deserved break.

If you were oncourse at Pukekohe Park on either of the aforementioned occasions you might have seen Michaela Sobieská, much valued foreman at Kingsclere Stables, by Prowess' side. Michaela had an unconventional route into the thoroughbred industry but it was her love of the horse that has seen her carve out a career working with what she describes as, "my true passion."

Michaela was born in the Czech Republic and she is the first person in her family to be bitten by the racing bug. Thoroughbred racing doesn't have much of a following in Czech Republic and whilst Michaela has had ponies as long as she can remember, no one else in her family has had any involvement with the industry — not your typical start.

Michaela, who completed a masters degree in marketing and communications from Thomas Bata University, embarked on her big OE immediately after completing her studies, finding herself in the Gold Coast, Australia, with a working holiday visa and very little English. Michaela comments, “horses were the only thing I knew, and luckily I didn’t need to talk much.”

“I approached Michael Costa, one of the leading trainers in the Gold Coast at that time, and spent the whole year of my visa working for him and learning about thoroughbreds.

“When my time in Australia came to an end, I travelled through South East Asia, all the while knowing that I wanted to stick with thoroughbreds.

“I applied for a working holiday visa in New Zealand and emailed a few stables who’s backgrounds I admired, and I ended up working for Roger and Robert a few days later.”

This fortuitous turn of events has seen Michaela fully embrace her passion for horses, turning what was a lifelong hobby into a successful career.

“Horses were always my passion. I have had them around pretty much my whole life and I can honestly say that I am truly happy with what I am doing and where I am – which I know isn’t something many people can say. I can absolutely see myself in the industry for the long term.”

When asked how she manages the less desirable sides of the industry — the early starts — Michaela says that whilst they aren’t her favourite part, she’s always quick to remind herself that the reason she does this is her enduring love of the horse which helps her push through — and the coffee too of course.

Her favourite part of the role is probably easily guessed at this point. She strives to ensure each horse at the stable is healthy, happy and in the best condition they can be. “There isn’t a better feeling than bringing home a happy and sound winner.” She relishes the challenge of managing a team of people, as their happiness and job satisfaction directly impacts the horses under her care.

When the conversation turns to Prowess, Michaela recalls her first start at Whanganui — requiring an overnight trip that saw them cement their relationship.

Below: Michaela and Prowess at the New Zealand Bloodstock Karaka Million after her win in the \$1m Karaka Million 3YO Classic



“It’s very special being part of Prowess’ journey. She has such lovely owners who love and enjoy every part of her journey. They’ve been involved since day one.

“Prowess is a very easy filly to have around but she does like to let everyone around know if she feels fit and happy. She, of course, knows she is pretty and classy so she likes to show off too!”

When I asked what Michaela thinks makes Prowess so special, she jokes that there isn’t enough time in the day to answer — her high regard for the horse even more evident as she outlines the fillies’ characteristics.

“She knows her worth, loves being in the stable, but also loves doing her job and crossing the line first.

“She also loves all kinds of attention but tells you when she wants to be left alone.

“In the weeks leading up to the Karaka Million, I believed in her whole-heartedly as I could see how great she felt. She didn’t put a foot wrong that week. She was so relaxed and confident the whole time and, even though it was one of the strongest fields seen in recent years, I knew she would do anything to prove to us how special she is.

“The following wins [the Bonecrusher New Zealand Stakes and Vinery Stud Stakes] just showed us how much she loves it. She just kept coming back from each race even stronger, both mentally and physically.

“I cannot wait for her to show us what else she is capable of next season.” 🐾

With Prowess’ star on the rise and a number of promising young ones in the stable, Michaela believes there are some exciting times ahead for her and the Kingsclere Stables team.

Prowess

Breeding— Proisir x Donna Marie (NZ)

Trained by— Roger James & Robert Wellwood

Owned by— HD & J Skipper, C Skipper,

A Skipper & M Schlooz



WIN THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME

Do you know a deserving industry participant who goes above and beyond?



Our partners, Hawaiian Airlines and the Japan Racing Association, share our admiration for those doing the hard yards in the industry and in recognition of this, we've got a once-in-a-lifetime trip planned for one lucky winner.

Flying Hawaiian Airlines, we want to send a special industry participant (and a friend) to Tokyo, Japan for 4 nights with the chance to experience a Group 1 raceday at Tokyo Racecourse in June 2024. Then, they'll fly to Waikiki, Hawaii for 4 nights of sun, sand and relaxation — an incredible trip.

If you know someone who deserves this amazing prize, click below to nominate your pick. You'll need to outline why you're nominating the individual in question and then they'll be in the running! An independent panel, consisting of Daniel Nakhle, Dennis Ryan, Michelle Saba, Gina Schick, John Thompson and Russell Williss will evaluate the entries and select our winner PLUS the nominator of the winning industry participant will also receive 100,000 Hawaiian Airlines air miles so they can enjoy their own sun-filled vacay.

NOMINATE | [Click here to nominate your pick to win.](#)

JUDGING PANEL

(in alphabetical order):

Daniel Nakhle

Daniel is founder and principal of Byerley Park, founder of the New Zealand Equine Academy and is a former director of the Auckland Racing Club.

Dennis Ryan

Founding editor and co-director of RaceForm, Dennis is one of New Zealand's pre-eminent racing journalists. He has also held various administrative roles, most recently as the former chair and current director of the Matamata Racing Club.

Michelle Saba

Michelle is a respected racing journalist with over 40 years' experience in the industry. An Auckland Thoroughbred Racing life member, Michelle is also a member of the New Zealand Thoroughbred Breeders' Association council.

Gina Schick

Founder and director of EventStars, one of New Zealand's most prominent thoroughbred rehoming facilities. Gina is also co-owner of Windsor Park Stud.

John Thompson

Part owner and managing director of Rich Hill Stud, John is also the New Zealand Thoroughbred Breeders' Association president.

Russell (Rusty) Williss

New Zealand Country Director for Hawaiian Airlines and keen racing fan and supporter. Rusty has ownership in several thoroughbreds in New Zealand and Australia.

*Terms and conditions apply. Entries are open now and close on October 31st 2023.





THE WINNING POST BECKONS

AIDAN RODLEY

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ATR trackman Jason Fulford
talks to us about New Zealand's
first StrathAyr track.

!

For a bloke whose life, by his own admission, was once going nowhere, it's clear Jason Fulford has found his vocation. From living his life on the wrong side of the tracks, Fulford has become New Zealand racing's most respected trackman. It's a transformation that has played out at Ellerslie over the last 25 years to the point where, as Auckland Thoroughbred Racing's racecourse manager, Fulford has been tasked with implementing New Zealand's first StrathAyr track at Ellerslie. Spend any time with him and it's not hard to work out that he's clearly the right man for the job.

Much of my interview with Fulford focuses around the science of the work at hand. Who would have known there was this much to growing grass? But Fulford's passion for his job shines through, as does his knowledge of his subject. That's through a combination of hands-on experience in the job, a thirst for knowledge and the willingness to take in the advice of turf aficionados. That desire to educate himself on the subject has seen Fulford quickly become an expert. In charge of the Ellerslie track for the past 22 years, Fulford knows the track intimately. Since the racetrack was shut down to begin the construction of the new StrathAyr surface after last year's Auckland Cup Week carnival in March, Fulford's workload has changed. Instead of day-to-day turf management, he has found himself supervising the many facets of work occurring at Ellerslie, while careful to take time to educate himself on all things StrathAyr track maintenance and upkeep. "It's just about absorbing everything. I'm forever taking notes and taking steps to make sure I'm on the ball to look after a StrathAyr track," he says. "It's nerve-wracking, don't get me wrong, but I've got the support of people who really want to see it happen as well."

Frequently through the interview, Fulford goes into detail of an example of a specific science he's implementing. First-up it's about the importance of rock phosphate in the prevention of leaching of nutrients through the sand and why it's so necessary. Our 45-minute interview is littered with these explanations and leaves me better informed thanks to Fulford's willingness to dumb it down for me. But still I leave with my head spinning. That the 1 percent of peat moss in the track is enough to hold the moisture of irrigation but also helps in keeping the sand at the right temperature is probably more than I need to know but Fulford lives and breathes this stuff. "It's a whole different science of turf management to what we're used to in New Zealand," Fulford says, before explaining that a sand-based track changes temperature through the heat of the sun and consequently becomes more susceptible to disease, meaning he'll have to take preventative measures to avoid that happening, such as applying fungicides. Fulford will also have new technology to help him but he's been mindful that he first needs to intimately know how the track behaves in different conditions before he avails himself to the benefits of the new-age systems.

As part of Fulford's quest for knowledge, he's surrounding himself with the right experts: agronomists, sports turf experts and Australian track managers who have had experience with StrathAyr tracks, such as Moonee Valley's Marty Synan. They're important sounding boards for Fulford if he wants assurances he's going down the right path or simply the right people to ask for advice.

Setbacks from a wet winter have put time pressures on Fulford and his team but the obstacles along the way will only serve to make the completed task all the more satisfying and it's evident he's relishing the challenge. "I've had to put on another hat and learn this whole new thing, which is pretty cool. I've been here 25 years and I'd never say my job was getting boring but this is something completely different. The timing is right, especially with what's happening for racing as a whole."

Over the past 18 months, Ellerslie has undergone a dramatic makeover. Perhaps the biggest visual change is the addition of a massive new pond, stretching nearly 200m long and 85m wide to a depth of 6m. It will hold 18,000 cubic metres of water and is capable of holding up to 30,000 cubic metres of water in case of flooding. A new ambulance track has been



constructed around the inside 3m of the track and new fencing will adorn the track. But it's the StrathAyr track that really has Fulford excited. "The track itself will look exactly the same," Fulford says, perhaps oversimplifying the complexities of the layers below. Upkeep will involve fortnightly spraying to prevent diseases and fungal growth and fortnightly soil and leaf testing but Fulford has utmost confidence that Ellerslie's new track is the perfect fit for the course. "The StrathAyr track is going to be very safe, we know that. The job now is growing grass and making it perform its job. If it looks the part, you know it's going to perform its part. The StrathAyr doesn't lie. It's going to be a track that's going to be consistent all year round. The main thing is there will be no room for complacency."

Another facet of Fulford's role with ATR is overseeing the track at Pukekohe Park, which has copped a much heavier workload while Ellerslie has been out of action. He is quick to commend Pukekohe track manager Emery White's role in ensuring the track has continued to perform so well despite the extra raceday traffic. "A lot of why the track has performed as well as it has is through the work Emery White has done. It's an absolute credit to him — and that goes back to 18 months of work," Fulford says, though typically he's striving to raise the bar. "This track has done superbly well but I also believe it can do better. We've got a long-term plan to make this perform to its absolute best." Much of that is adding a product to the track that will help it hold moisture through the summer, adding nutrients to the soil and strengthening the turf root system.

Born in Te Horo on the Kapiti Coast, Fulford's parents made their living off the land, chiefly through shearing and on dairy farms. His grandfather Jim Winiata was patron of the Otaki-Māori Racing Club for over six decades.

As a boy scout, Fulford's father Harold had undertaken some voluntary work on the Otaki course and took a keen interest in the track, which years later led to a job as course manager, a job he held for 40 years. "He knew it was laid down like a road so when he came along he was the first one in the country to do a deep ripping, opening it right up. It was all rock underneath but he fixed it. As kids, that was one of our jobs growing up, picking up rock at the track. As part of his time on farms doing pasture management, Dad knew how important aeration was and a lot of people in racing learned that through that too. He was able to reverse that compaction." When Harold died in 2010, Fulford's mum Terese, who had co-managed the track for several years prior, took over the job, becoming New Zealand's first female racecourse manager. But for all the family influence, Fulford had no intention of following them down the same path. "I managed the crossing at trackwork for four or five years but I never really enjoyed that and by the end I'd had enough and just got out," he says. He moved to Taupo but found himself mixing with the wrong crowd and getting in trouble. "I was dishonouring the family name and I knew I had to sort my life out," Fulford says. He had completed a three-year racecourse turf management course with the Open Polytech in Porirua and that led to a job working on the track at Ellerslie.

Three years later, he became racecourse manager, succeeding Paul Williams.

Fulford and Lana, his wife of 29 years, have five children. Lana has been there for the whole journey, right from the Otaki days, and is now an important part of the Ellerslie track team too. "That can be pretty testing at times. She's the only staff member that answers back but we have a lot of fun too," Fulford says. Together they take real pride in what they do but at times it can be an unforgiving job and Fulford is careful to protect himself from any negativity around track preparation, taking a wide berth from social media. "I love my job. A little bit of criticism really hurts and it doesn't take much for it to be heard. Kudos just comes from job satisfaction and that's what I find uplifting. My main goal is to get it right and if you get it right, you know you've done your job. I've been looked after by the club really well so I must be doing something right. I'd have been escorted down the road pretty quick if I wasn't, I reckon. It can be pretty cut-throat on the side of the fence we're on."

As the horses get loaded into the barriers for the first meeting on the new track, Fulford is likely to take a quiet moment for himself. "I'm going to be pretty proud because I'll know then it's passed all the tests required to get to raceday. We've got world-class riders who will be on horseback checking it out and they'll know how consistent the footing is and how it performs and that will be an exciting phase in itself. This is the making of history. There's a lot of promising things happening in this industry and this is an important part of that. It's pretty cool to be part of something at the cutting-edge like this." 🐾



Jason, Lana and two of their daughters, Jana and Star

**“AUCKLAND’S
LEADING THE WAY
IN MAKING THE
INDUSTRY A BETTER
PLACE AND WE
CAN’T WAIT TO GET
BACK THERE AND
START RACING ON
THE STRATHAYR.”**

WATCH | To hear our full interview with Robert Wellwood, one of New Zealand’s most promising young trainers, and Aidan Rodley, click the link.



Clerks of the course



The clerks of the course cut familiar figures at racetracks around the world. Their distinctive red jackets, taken from traditional hunting dress, and their often grey horses, portray a look of a bygone era.

Their role is essential on raceday, maintaining order amongst the field before, during and after the races, and responding to any situations that arise.

So, it's no wonder that Auckland Thoroughbred Racing (ATR) CEO Paul Wilcox has been overheard saying that if 'Colesy' isn't concerned, he's not concerned, such is the faith in the expertise that the people in these roles command.

The Colesy he's referring to is Ross Coles, clerk of the course for ATR, and a familiar face on raceday for over 50 years now. He's joined by co-clerk of the course Guy Marriner — a pairing at Ellerslie, and more recently Pukekohe Park, for over 15 years.

Ross has always had a passion for horses, and racing has been a part of his life for a long time. He held an amateur riding licence in his late teens and at the ripe-old-age of 14 he filled in as clerk of the course at Avondale Racecourse. A few years later he became a full-time attendant at Ellerslie and in 2019 the Club celebrated Ross' 50-year anniversary as part of the launch of the new stabling complex.

Guy Marriner, whilst newer to the gig than Ross, also has a long history with the Club, joining as clerk of the course in 2007 when he was apprentice to Ross at Pakuranga Hunt.

Tradition says that the holder of the huntsman position is also traditionally a clerk of the course, and upon Ross' retirement in 2008, Guy moved into the Pakuranga Huntsman position, holding that role for 13 years.

But, both men would be lost without their other partners oncourse, their horses. It goes without saying that the equines in these roles are cut from a pretty special cloth.

And Ross' Mister Grey and Guy's Blizzard are no exception.

Mister Grey and Blizzard are both ex-racehorses, retrained to provide a safety net for those thoroughbreds still plying their trade on the track. It makes sense, given they need the speed to catch a loose horse, but the trait that is most important is their ability to be calm in every situation.

Such is the lovely nature of both Mister Grey and Blizzard, you can often see them hanging out in the back parade ring at Ellerslie with a flock of adoring children (or Instagrammers!) clamouring for a pat, selfie or chat between races. Ross tells us that Mister Grey loves the attention he gets between races. Guy adds "I've met one or two of Blizzard's racing syndicate owners at various meetings and they have always been delighted to see him back oncourse in a new role."

Ross and Mister Grey have been a duo for over 12 years. Ross says his mount took to his new oncourse role like a duck to water with the "right attitude to work and other horses which makes him ideal for the role". He says Mister Grey "isn't intimidated by the raceday environment" and in fact, seems to thrive no matter what gets thrown at him — with the exception of 'kids karts' which get Mister Grey's heart racing to this day.

Guy and Blizzard formed their partnership in 2017 after Blizzard was spotted by Guy's wife, Melissa, at the races. He stood out due to his quiet temperament and striking looks (grey of course). A mutual connection in Jamie Gillies saw Blizzard's trainer, Emma-Lee Browne, get in touch with the Marriners at the end of Blizzards racing career, and the rest, as they say is history.

Melissa Marriner prepared Blizzard for his new role with support from Jess Gundry and Ruby Russo. He spent the summer getting out and about from farm hacking to jump schooling to his debut at a sport horse competition — even managing a win in a dressage competition.

The end goal was to see him as quiet and relaxed as possible in all environments and Guy says “he is really quiet, no fuss, fast enough to make a catch and most importantly really loves going to the races.”

Guy and Melissa also provide Ellerslie’s ever-popular ‘ponies to pat’ with Blizzard also filling in on occasion. Blizzard has an apprentice in Lighthouse (ex-Clotworthy Racing Stables) who will likely make his clerk of the course debut this season after being earmarked by his trainers as a horse with the ideal temperament for the job — and that all-important grey colour.

Ross says Mister Grey will likely be his last clerk of the course horse and, in chatting with Ross, you can see the fondness he has for his partner of over a decade.

“We’re all there with a job to do and you just do your best to make sure everything goes well,” says Ross.

It’s clear that Mister Grey and Blizzard fulfil their roles with aplomb, making the task on raceday that much easier for the men in red. 🐾



Mister Grey

Age— 18

Breeding— Pins x Landon

Trained by— Kevin Gray

Owned by— H M & Mrs P M Forbes

Career— Mister Grey raced 24 times for 2 wins and just shy of \$20,000 in stakes.



Blizzard

Age— 12

Breeding— Any Suggestion x Duene

Trained by— Emma-Lee Browne & David Browne

Owned by— C & Mrs L Betts, Mrs N M & W A Bishop, D B & Mrs P S Fullerton, Miss A Gore, A Moore & Sparta Racing Ltd

Career— Blizzard was a successful racehorse with 6 wins out of 43 starts to his name and earnings of over \$200,000 in stakes.



Blizzard and Lighthouse at home in Pukekawa







MEET OUR NEW AMBASSADORS

With a fresh new start for Auckland Thoroughbred Racing (ATR), this also feels like a great time for some fresh new faces to join the ATR 'stable' of ambassadors.

So we are welcoming Caitlin O'Sullivan and Ryan Teece into the fold as our newest ambassadors for the 2023/24 season.

Caitlin's last name might be ringing some bells. She's the daughter of racing royalty, Lance and Bridgette O'Sullivan, and is a key member of the New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing marketing team in her own right.

"My parents definitely ignited my love for the sport, but they never pushed me towards the industry," she says. "In saying that, it is in my DNA, racing goes back four generations in my family."

It really is no surprise then that Caitlin works in the industry and she says when her marketing role with NZTR came up she jumped at the opportunity.

"They say do what you love and love what you do! I couldn't think of another industry I'd be more passionate about than thoroughbred racing. It felt like the natural fit for me and I'm thrilled I get to contribute to New Zealand racing in my own way."

Ryan's love of horses also started at a young age, getting his first pony when he was 10 years old, describing it as "love at first ride". Though starting in the sporthorse world, his love of horses is wide ranging and it very much includes racing. He too credits his supportive, albeit non-horsey, parents for a passion that turned into a career.

“I MANAGED TO CARVE OUT A WONDERFUL CAREER WORKING FULL-TIME IN THE EQUINE INDUSTRY FROM THE TIME I LEFT SCHOOL. I WOULD GROOM, RIDE, AND COMPETE — BASICALLY DOING WHATEVER I COULD TO GET PAID TO WORK IN THE INDUSTRY I LOVED.

In that time, I worked behind the scenes as an event photographer, as well as at an equestrian magazine — so horses truly were my life. They also took me to Australia and the UK, and I have built lifelong friendships all over the world. I never took it for granted that I could turn this passion into a job.”

Ryan is a strong advocate for thoroughbreds becoming sporthorses once they’ve completed their career on the track.

“I’ve experienced the joy of owning and competing successful off-the-track horses and completely appreciate just how exceptional thoroughbreds are as a breed no matter what they are doing.

“My current horse (Star Tsar) won the Dunstan Feeds Stayers Championship Final in 2021 at Ellerslie. He’s already proving himself as a really good horse off the track and will undoubtedly have lots of success.

“I also work with a previous Karaka Million 3YO winner (Scott Base) in his new life and he has done incredibly well.”

When the conversation turns to what each love about a day at the races, Caitlin struggled to narrow it down to one thing.

“A day at the races has so many facets. My friends and I really enjoy the opportunity to get dressed up for the

day. Of course there’s the thrill of watching the races themselves too, with some of my favourite memories stemming from a winning occasion for my family. Finally there’s the fun of the afterparty and getting a chance to let your hair down as the sun sets. It’s the ultimate day out and I guess my answer is ‘all of it!’”

Ryan says his favourite part is the emotions of a day spent trackside.

“From owners, grooms, trainers and jockeys who are experiencing a rollercoaster of emotions, to punters and spectators who might have won or lost. Everyone is feeling something different and it can be so electric regardless of your own involvement. Some people will have the most memorable day of their lives at Ellerslie and that’s special to witness.”

Speaking of memorable days, the pair agreed that the New Zealand Bloodstock Karaka Million is their favourite raceday.

“The New Zealand Bloodstock Karaka Million is a hard one to top,” says Ryan. “There is so much time and effort poured into it by the owners, trainers and grooms — watching that all come to fruition is awesome.”

For Caitlin, it’s the event that keeps getting better and better.



*An earlier version of this story incorrectly stated that Star Tsar was sold as a yearling. David Paykel bred and raced Star Tsar.



Far left: Ryan and husband Matt McLean oncourse at Ellerslie

Left: Caitlin and sister Georgia trackside

“The calibre of racing at the New Zealand Bloodstock Karaka Million is unrivalled, especially when combined with the hospitality and entertainment on offer on that night. It’s a raceday that has all the ingredients to be excellent but somehow, when you’re there, it’s always even better than you envisioned.”

Caitlin and Ryan were natural choices for ATR when considering who might be the new faces of thoroughbred racing for the upcoming season. And Caitlin admits, it was surprise that was her first emotion when she was asked, quickly followed by excitement.

“My mother (Bridgette) was the first Ellerslie ambassador back in the early 2000s, so it feels special to be following in her footsteps.

“It’s an honour to be asked to represent New Zealand’s premier racing club. I love nothing more than a day at the races and hope to share that experience with new faces over the upcoming racing season.”

And Ryan is looking forward to sharing his passion and knowledge of the industry with New Zealanders right across the country. “I’ve always been passionate about the equine and racing worlds and I feel so excited to have this chance to give back.”

Both are already vocal advocates for the industry and they are looking forward to being able to share even more in their new roles.

Ryan would love to help people better understand how incredible the sport is. “You miss so much if you’re watching short clips online and even being at the races you don’t see the love, care and passion that goes into every horse behind the scenes. For me, it was a no-brainer to be involved in promoting and educating others. It’s an industry that’s just so important to our country.”

Through Caitlin’s ‘day job’, she dedicates a considerable amount of time to growing racing’s audience, alongside educating those less familiar with the industry.

“I WISH EVERYONE KNEW HOW WELL THE HORSES ARE TREATED – IT’S SOMETHING I’M REALLY PASSIONATE ABOUT! THE RACING INDUSTRY IS MADE UP OF SO MANY FANTASTIC PEOPLE WHO DEDICATE THEIR LIVES TO THE CARE AND WELLBEING OF THESE AMAZING ATHLETES.”

Both say they are eager for the return to Ellerslie and Caitlin, who lives just down the road, is already counting down to getting back to her ‘local’ track.


“I’m an Auckland local so a day racing at Ellerslie is the perfect opportunity to dress up and spend a day with friends in my backyard.”

It sounds like she’s not alone in her eagerness either.

“If I had a penny for every time someone’s asked me ‘when is Ellerslie back’, I’d be doing very well,” she says.

Ryan, also based in Auckland, says he and his friends are champing at the bit to get back to a raceday at Ellerslie as well. “I think everyone will come back with a new vigour so I’m ready to see the energy that comes with it. Ellerslie is so easy to access from anywhere in Auckland and I know it’ll be a lot of fun. It’s such an exciting time for the industry and I will be trackside to take it all in for sure!”

Here at ATR, we want to highlight everything our industry has to offer from the people to the horses. It’s a thrilling sport and a brilliant entertainment proposition, but perhaps more importantly, it offers thousands of people the opportunity to work in an industry they love.

We know there are so many wonderful stories to share, and we look forward to having Caitlin and Ryan support us in that. 

WELCOME CAITLIN AND RYAN!

TIME MEN



A MACHINE

DON'T THINK ELLERSLIE WAS HOME TO A WORLD-FIRST? WANT TO BET ON IT?

Auckland Thoroughbred Racing (ATR) is a club looking to the future. The development that's currently underway at Ellerslie in the form of the track renovation and the future development of a more significant, fit-for-purpose training centre at Pukekohe Park underlines this sentiment.

And that vision is part of our heritage too with Ellerslie Racecourse laying claim to the world's first-ever automatic totalisator machine — a piece of technology that's celebrating its 110th anniversary this year.

It was on March 22, 1913, that the world's first automatic totalisator machine was used at a race meeting and the creation of this was described by William Mackie as "the single greatest innovation racing had known" and was set to revolutionise wagering around the world.

BUT TO TRULY UNDERSTAND WHY THIS MACHINE WAS SO REVOLUTIONARY, WE NEED TO GO FURTHER BACK.



· ATR ·
ELLERSLIE



In a post-industrial-revolution world, mid-19th century England saw an increase in betting due to expanding wealth in the middle class. Unfortunately, this rise in popularity also presented a number of issues around fairness. Joseph Oller, who resided in Paris at the time, set to resolve these problems by the creation of a system known as pari-mutuel ('wagering among ourselves') betting. This type of gambling, whilst actually banned in France at the time, spread to other countries and became known as the 'totalisator' system after the French word for counter, totalisateur.

The early machines designed to facilitate this system were manually operated devices and there are only 5 surviving early mechanical totalisator machines in the world, all of which are in New Zealand. In fact, there is an example at MOTAT of a machine previously owned and used by the Auckland Racing Club. This machine is unusual in that it is operated by foot pedals instead of the more common hand cranks.

These early machines proved successful to a point but presented an operational issue whereby the more bets placed, the more the machines, with their manual operation, became a bottleneck. Mechanical

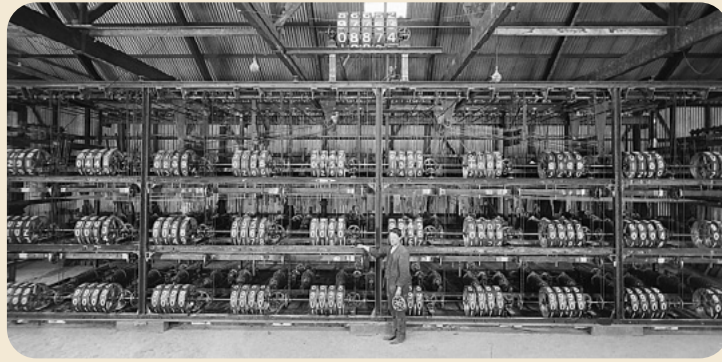
totalisators were replaced by human power once again in an attempt to speed up the process, but this proved a temporary solution as the volume of bets steadily increased.

ENTER GEORGE ALFRED JULIUS.

George Julius was born in Norwich, England in 1873 and not long after, his family emigrated to Ballarat, Australia where his father had been appointed Archdeacon for the diocese of Ballarat.

He entered the Melbourne Church of England Grammar School in 1885 and then followed his family to New Zealand where his father had been appointed Bishop of Christchurch. In 1890, George Julius enrolled in a BSc in Mechanical Engineering at Canterbury College, University of New Zealand, specialising in railway engineering and became the first engineering student to graduate from the college.

An opportunity in the West Australian Railways saw him relocate back to Australia where his



Left: The Auckland Racing Club totalisator in Sydney before being transported to New Zealand



Below: Crowds at Ellerslie Racecourse in front of the post-war totalisator building

reputation as a gifted engineer began to precede him. His original automatic totalisator machine didn't have any grounding in racing or betting and was actually designed to be a mechanical vote-counting machine.

George Julius, as quoted in 'Julius Poole and Gibson, The First Eighty Years', said,

"A friend in the west conceived the idea of getting me to make a machine to register votes, and so to expedite elections by giving the result without any human intervention. I invented one that aroused some interest, and it was submitted to the Commonwealth Government."

When the machine was rejected by the Australian government, George Julius adapted the design to create a racecourse totalisator.

"Up to that time I had never seen a racecourse. A friend who knew of a "jam tin tote" — a machine which kept a sort of record of tickets sold at each window — explained to me what was required in an efficient totalisator. I found the problem of great

interest as the perfect tote must have a mechanism capable of adding the records from a number of operators all of whom might issue a ticket on the same horse at the same instant."

"I set to work on a machine that would permit the simultaneous addition, give instantaneous records, and would satisfy the requirements of any racecourse."

"The model was built in my spare time, and when perfected a company was formed and secured its first order for a machine at the Auckland (Ellerslie) Racecourse in 1913."

The machine from the get-go was deemed to be a great success and whilst it didn't reduce the number of people required to operate the totalisator, it did mean the betting transactions were recorded accurately, the investments made displayed immediately, and the machine could be balanced in two minutes instead of the 10 or more previously required — a great perk given the race could not begin until the totalisator has been balanced.



Bob Doran, computing veteran and ex-Head of Department and Professor of Computer Science at the University of Auckland, explained that “the purpose of the totalisator machine was to display in large readable figures, in ‘real time’ as bets were made on the next race, the total number of ‘unit bets’ made on each horse in the race and the grand total of all such bets.”

“The totalisator design had to allow for bets to be placed on the same horse at the same instant at all 30 ticket windows without any bets being lost. The totals of bets had to be recorded completely accurately and with no significant delay so that the race could be run immediately after the totalisator was closed and the dividend for the winning bet (only simple bets on winners were catered-for) calculated accurately.”

“The Ellerslie totalisator could also handle up to 30 horses in each race. The total bets for each of the 30 horses were displayed in three rows of 10, the horse numbers being written above the displays and the displays were at the front of the upper floor of a specially designed two-story building.”

He comments that “there are many of these totalisator buildings still surviving at the racetracks around New Zealand” and, as you might be aware, we, here at Ellerslie Racecourse, are home to one such example.


The original building, constructed in 1906, was altered in 1913 to house the first automatic totalisator machine however a new and improved building was constructed post-war. This building remained until the stable development project commenced in 2018, though the totalisator machine itself was long since taken away.

What you now know as Tote on Ascot was the north end of this building and was carefully preserved to create a stunning event venue. The space still features the original betting windows and a restored open beamed ceiling today – a lovely nod to the heritage of the racecourse for racegoers and event attendees alike.



The façade of the post-war iteration of the totalisator is now on display as the focal point of Ellerslie's stabling complex. It was decommissioned and covered over in favour of a new board that showed the approximate dividends that would be paid for each horse for both a win and a place however, the façade was uncovered and restored as part of the aforementioned stable development and is a wonderful reminder of Ellerslie's place in the history books.

The installation at Ellerslie Racecourse of an automatic totalisator machine set in motion a long line of refinements and developments by George Julius' company, Automatic Totalisators Limited, that transformed the wagering landscape around the world.

It's an impressive legacy and George Julius' commitment to innovation and excellence are traits we as a club hope to emulate for the betterment of thoroughbred racing in the Auckland region and beyond. Who knows, another world-first could still be in our future! 



Top left: Construction underway on what we now know as Tote on Ascot

Top: Part of the crowd using the new totalisator at Ellerslie in 1921

Above/above left: Tote on Ascot is the definition of refined tradition

THE DEBUTANTE
WITH
Kelsey Hannan



**With her star firmly on the rise,
20-year-old Kelsey Hannan is on
the 'ones to watch' list.**

|

Kelsey hasn't had a chance to race at New Zealand's racing headquarters yet but with the return to Ellerslie on the horizon and Kelsey's nous in the saddle only growing, we're sure she'll be lining up at the starting gates very soon.

We sat down with Kelsey, widely regarded as one of New Zealand's most promising apprentice jockeys, and asked her some quickfire questions to learn more about this breakout performer ahead of her Ellerslie debut.

What legendary horse — past or present — would you love to ride?

Frankel — he truly is a legend.

Which Auckland Thoroughbred Racing race would you love to win?

It's a toss-up between the \$1m DoubleTree by Hilton Karaka Million 2YO or the \$1m Karaka Million 3YO Classic. The New Zealand Bloodstock Karaka Million is such a great night of racing so to take out one of the features would be really special.

Are you excited for the return to Ellerslie as both a jockey and a racegoer?

Yes, I can't wait to get the chance to race ride at Ellerslie, made all the more exciting by the installation of the StrathAyr track. Whilst I haven't ridden in a race there yet, I did have my first and second trial winners at Ellerslie so it's got good memories already.

What's your favourite memory from your racing career so far?

Winning the Kūmara Gold Nuggets for my first bosses Kenny Rae and Krystal Williams. The win was my 50th as an apprentice but it also holds really special memories because of the horse, The Buffer, was part-owned by Richard Bishop who predicted we'd win that race together a few years back. When I was living in Christchurch, Richard took me under his wing and treated me like one of his grandchildren so we got quite close.

It was wonderful to have him able to be oncourse to see the win especially since he's since lost his health battle.

What's one thing you wished people knew about the industry?

I wish people realised how much work and commitment there is behind the scenes. It's so much more than just showing up on race day.

Favourite horse you've ridden to date?

It would have to be Follow Your Dreams, he's a pretty special horse to me. I was working for Kenny Rae and Krystal Williams when he was a two-year-old and I was his handler.

I went to every race meeting with him, I rode him, and he was my absolute favourite. Then he happened to get named Follow Your Dreams which seemed very apt.

And finally, who is the jockey or someone else in the industry you look up to most?

That's a really tough question. The New Zealand racing industry is full of people I admire so I'm just going to say that it's too hard to name just one person!





· ATR ·

ELLERSLIE

**A FAN
BY ANY
OTHER
NAME**

SINCE
1874



Racing fans will tell you that there's nothing more thrilling than a day spent trackside. It's the perfect combination of sport, entertainment, fashion and freedom. So why, as an industry, are attendance numbers (and wagering dollars) dropping?

Much has been written about the barriers to participation in racing, and the task of attracting new fans to our sport has seen a range of initiatives introduced, from free youth memberships at clubs, to 'mates rates' ticket deals and famous music acts, to compelling oncourse activations designed to entice audiences of all ages.

It's a problem addressed by Racing Victoria Chief Executive Officer Andrew Jones at the 2023 Asian Racing Conference. His presentation, aptly named 'The Fan', which he kindly reproduced for the New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing Industry Development Day in late March, delves into the importance of fans to our industry.

Jones said that fans, either directly or indirectly, pay the bills in every sport. Whether that's through attendance at events, cultural influence, engagement with media, memberships or simply through wagering, fans are integral to a sport's survival.

He went on to say, "it is our job to offer customers what they like, not our customers' job to like what we offer". Racing, like most sports, suffers from what he describes as the 'insider problem', whereby the sport is administrated by those who already like it, which means the fan experience may not be front of mind.

So, in this increasingly competitive entertainment space, how does racing compete?

Our answer was to build smart partnerships, so in the 2020/2021 season we partnered with Invades, a UK-based company, with a business model centred around events and activations for university students. The company helped breathe life into one of our quieter days on track in October, and with more than 120 events under their belt in the UK, Australia and New Zealand since, their unique style of communication and savvy networking is paying dividends for the racing industry around the globe.

After this success, Invades will be returning to Ellerslie for the 2023/24 season with a mission to reach and introduce racing to a new, younger, more diverse audience who may never have considered horse racing as an experience and sport.

Invades was born out of founder Dominic Matcham's firsthand experience oncourse in the UK whilst attending university. He explained that he really enjoyed the day, but couldn't help but notice the aging fan base. Soon after, Invades was created.

“We noticed that there was a significantly aging fan base in racing and other traditional sports, and felt that the Invades brand, with a highly targeted gen-Z strategy, could be used to attract that key next generation of fans.

“We invest heavily into our social channels and work with clubs to create events that are accessible, affordable and fun for all.”

Dominic also describes that first event at Ellerslie as one of his greatest successes, having used it as a launchpad to other events around New Zealand and Australia.

“95% of our customers have never attended a raceday before, and we find the feedback is very good.

“Testament to this was our rapid growth across the New Zealand market through word of mouth following our Ellerslie debut, which resulted in sell-out events in Wellington and Christchurch.

“Racing as both a sporting and entertainment format is perfect. The way race cards are structured, with time between each race for people to listen to music and enjoy drinks and food, means that a day on track is very engaging for our gen-Z audience.”

New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing (NZTR) have also put a renewed focus on attracting young people to the races this season, with the creation of The Grand Tour Racing Festival.

In answering the question ‘why now?’, NZTR Head of Marketing, Communications and Wagering Partnerships, Dan Smith says, “It’s no secret thoroughbred racing has lost some relevance over the years, and we need new fans to enter the sport.

“The Grand Tour Racing Festival was born out of a need to ensure the next generation saw a day at the races as a genuine entertainment option for them. To do this we had to actually get them on track, perhaps for the very first time.

“In a cluttered entertainment market we recognised that we needed to stand out and it was imperative that The Grand Tour brand spoke loud and clear to the ‘year one’ target audience being primarily gen-Z.”





“We’re ready to move on from reminiscing about the ‘heyday’ of racing in New Zealand when it was part of the Kiwi-psyche, and instead set a new goal to see a return to this in the future.”

With one season under their belt, the NZTR team have turned their attention to the 2023/24 season, which will see a stronger focus on the oncourse experience. Their inspiration? The modern sport experience seen at events like the Super Bowl and Australian Open with exciting fan engagement, top-tier music acts and stronger integration with the sport itself via athletes. All this and more is on the cards this coming season.

Dan is quick to say that The Grand Tour Racing Festival is a long-term focus for NZTR, and ultimately it wants to see the industry showcased at its best, both on and off the track.

“The end goal is to see a future for our sport. A bright and positive one.”

Olof Schybergson (Forbes) spoke of sports as being “the ultimate uniter, bringing together people of all races, ages and perspectives”, but he also feels the sports experience needs to change to keep up with modern expectations.

Key to this is breaking down of barriers between the athletes (or participants) and fans, with engagement outside of “gameday”. You only need to look at the popularity of ‘behind the scenes’ content like Formula 1’s Drive to Survive Netflix series to support this point

of view, but it’s also social content created by fans for fans driving growth.

Enter Luke Kemeys of Boys Get Paid (BGP) fame, another individual trying to grow the racing ‘fandom’. Boys Get Paid is a true success story, starting as a Facebook page for a group of mates to share tips. Now it is a membership group of over 18,000 racing fans who love a cheeky bet, a day out, or simply some camaraderie whilst enjoying sport.

“Having a day at the races with your best mates is one of those rollercoasters that you can’t quite get in other sporting codes,” Luke says.

The team behind BGP have taken that sense of anticipation and thrill and turned it into some very significant punters clubs as well.

An event that’s become a staple on the BGP calendar is the New Zealand Bloodstock Karaka Million. Perhaps one of New Zealand racing’s best examples of letting the fan dictate the experience, the raceday is short, sharp and staged under the setting sun — complete with million-dollar purses that attract both the who’s who of racing, and Auckland’s social set.

Luke describes the New Zealand Bloodstock Karaka Million as “the highlight of the racing calendar for our community due to the electric style of the raceday” and BGP don’t let the stakes be the only big numbers on the night.

The BGP Punters Club went past \$1 million in 2023, and the group estimated they had 15,000 participants watching the raceday from around Australasia.

Luke provides an illuminating answer when quizzed on the best aspect of a day at the races.

“When you have a room of 850 people screaming for the same result and thousands of people watching from home willing on the same horse, you can’t deny that sense of togetherness. It’s a really special feeling to see everyone so stoked and happy.

“I have some of those moments etched into my mind and I step back into them regularly and they give me goosebumps. Winning is a great feeling, but winning with your mates is another level.”

BGP have found a great formula to introduce new people to racing, so we asked Luke what he thinks racing could, or should, be doing to further expand the fan base.

“We’re living in a world of short attention spans and significant competition for that attention so racing must continue to innovate,” he says.

“There is a huge opportunity to bring people closer to the sport, we just need to be creative”.

With BGPs attention already turning to the New Zealand Bloodstock Karaka Million in 2024, it’s exciting to think about the level of interest and support that could be generated via their channels when combined with the much-anticipated return to Ellerslie.

To lean into a marketing cliché, ‘a day at the races really does have something for everyone’. There are any number of motivations to spending a day oncourse that clubs could hone in on, from those that just love a day out trackside, to those who love the party or social element; those who are there for a punt, those who love the sport, the contributors or the animals themselves. The list goes on and none of the categories are mutually exclusive.

A racing fan has many faces and we look forward to seeing all of them at Pukekohe Park or at Ellerslie come 2024. We’ll be doing our best to get as many of them there as possible to ensure our sport has a place in the lives and hearts of New Zealanders for many years to come. 





“There is a huge opportunity to bring people closer to the sport, we just need to be creative”.





Fast Track Insurance

BARFOOT & THOMPSON 600



“I BELIEVE THE COMBINATION OF THE NEW ALL-WEATHER TRACK, ELLERSLIE’S CENTRAL LOCATION AND ENHANCED FACILITIES, AS WELL AS THE ATTRACTIVE STAKES, WILL SEE NEW PARTICIPANTS ENTICED TO EXPERIENCE ALL THAT THOROUGHBRED OWNERSHIP HAS TO OFFER.”

Dame Wendy Pye, owner

BEHIND THE STARTING GATES: WHEN LEGACIES ALIGN

As club insiders know, sponsors form a crucial part of the raceday experience and here at Auckland Thoroughbred Racing (ATR), we're lucky enough to have one of the best in Barfoot & Thompson.

Founded in 1923, Barfoot & Thompson has been a private family-owned business for over 100 years and to this day is still run by the grandchildren of the original Barfoot and Thompson families. The company has won countless industry awards and from its small beginnings in a single Newmarket land agency, has grown into one of New Zealand's largest and most successful real estate companies.

Perhaps even more significantly, Barfoot & Thompson is also a true champion of its community, dedicating much time and resource to charities, events and organisations close to its heart. From the Starship Foundation to Auckland Zoo, Auckland Rugby to the Auckland Writer's Festival, Piha Surf Lifesaving and of course the racedays held by Auckland Thoroughbred Racing, the list of lucky beneficiaries is extensive. As they say, if their name is on it, their hearts are in it.

Barfoot & Thompson has become synonymous with both Auckland Cup Day and Twilight Summer Night with the iconic Barfoot & Thompson blue a familiar sight oncourse. In 2023, we celebrated the 11th anniversary of Barfoot & Thompson sponsoring the prestigious Auckland Cup and we are delighted to have such an iconic race aligned with such an iconic New Zealand brand.

We sat down with Peter Thompson, the Managing Director of Barfoot & Thompson and grandson of one of the original founders, Maurice Thompson, to learn more about his passion for sport, his excitement for the future of thoroughbred racing, and why he chooses to align his legacy with ours.



Q&A WITH PETER THOMPSON

MANAGING DIRECTOR
OF BARFOOT & THOMPSON



Barfoot & Thompson has recently celebrated 100 years in business which is a remarkable achievement for a family-owned business. What do you attribute Barfoot & Thompson's success to?

I believe it stems from good management across the generations but what it really comes down to is our people. Their loyalty, professionalism and longevity in the profession have always stood out and allowed us to be successful throughout our many years. We have a strong set of core values as a team — People, Family, Diversity and Community. We set ourselves high standards and we live by those standards.

Barfoot & Thompson has had a long association with sport in Auckland. Is it your own love for sport that drove this sponsorship direction?

A large part of it has been due to my love of sport and it all really started in the 1980s with Auckland Rugby before transitioning through to netball and beyond. I was also fortunate to talk to the likes of Sir Stephen Tindall, Sir Ralph Norris, and Sir Peter Leitch and saw how they gave back to the community through their businesses by making the connection through sport. This really spurred me on to do the same and I am so proud that we're able to champion such an extensive portfolio of sponsorship, not just in sport, at a local, regional, and national level.

Is your support of sport (of which racing is one of the lucky beneficiaries) a result of a purely commercial decision due to crowd size/reach or is it more about the community relationships such a portfolio fosters?

It's a combination — the relationships we form with those in our community are very special to us and we've made some long-lasting connections. At the same time, we will always look for value from what we give to the various organisations, sports, and clubs. Going to events, or watching them on television, and having your signage and branding featured throughout is instrumental to us as a business without a doubt.

You've recently celebrated your 11th year of sponsoring the Auckland Cup — with the race becoming intrinsically linked with your business — but I know you've had a long association with many sporting occasions and teams. What keeps you passionate about sport in Auckland?

I think in our business there are a lot of similarities with sport which really sparks my passion for it. You need to have a sharp focus, strong determination, competitive spirit, and a drive to succeed. Nothing beats that winning feeling.

I've been lucky, particularly in the last few years, with those we support having had some great success, but I'm certainly not someone who gives up on teams or people when they aren't winning. You ride the highs along with the lows and back them through thick and thin, that's part of the thrill of it all and it makes success even more enjoyable when you've been on that journey together.

Barfoot & Thompson have supported ATR at a number of racedays in the 2022/23 season, taking advantage of the more southern location of Pukekohe Park to involve the Pukekohe branch. With the merger and subsequent development at Ellerslie set to see ATR reach new audiences and heights (in addition to our presence at Pukekohe), what, as a racing fan, excites you about that? And from a business/sponsorship perspective?

We've certainly enjoyed our time out at Pukekohe Park, but nothing beats the thrill of a raceday at Ellerslie, so to finally get back to our hallowed turf with the all-weather track is a real point of excitement. The track development and increase in stakes will provide higher-quality fields and see a lot more competitive racing. I know the jockeys, trainers and owners alike are already so excited for it too.

From a sponsorship angle, the atmosphere Ellerslie provides is unparalleled. There is so much versatility in hospitality options to entertain guests and I always enjoy the opportunity to mix with different people who attend a raceday there. The place really elevates the occasion and provides a setting befitting prestigious racedays.

With Barfoot & Thompson Auckland Cup Day set to be run at Ellerslie in 2024, it will be one of the first significant racedays held after the upgrade. How would you describe the day to someone who has never attended?

It's a fun day that goes by very quickly. What's the old adage? 'Time flies when you're having fun'. Whether it's watching the horse's parade, following best dressed, having a flutter, toasting success with clients and friends or some other antics, there's never a dull moment.

Is it safe to say Barfoot & Thompson Auckland Cup Day or Barfoot & Thompson Twilight Summer Night are some of your favourite racedays? Or is there another one you'd like to attach the Barfoot & Thompson name to?

Yes, they are. Sentimentally, my other favourite raceday has always been the Boxing Day Races as I used to attend with my family as a child and the day holds some very special memories for me. I do also really enjoy the shorter format of the Twilight Summer Night raceday. It means you can stop on the way home from work for a few hours and still be home before dark...maybe!

Where did your love of racing come from? What part of a day oncourse would be your favourite?

My uncle was into racehorses for many years and a member of the Auckland Racing Club. Then, with people from NZ Realtors Group while on a trip to Fiji, we decided to buy a horse, Bula Baby, and that was my first taste of ownership.

She never won a race mind you, but we had lots of fun getting together to watch her race. In saying that, I must admit my favourite part of a day oncourse has to be seeing your horse win a race. It is, without a doubt, one of the most exhilarating things you'll ever experience.

Right: Peter Thompson presenting the iconic Auckland Cup to the owners of Roger That, 2020 winner

Any particular horses that you'd call your favourite?

I've owned several racehorses over the years and two stand out — Bella Mente and Need I Say More. Both had very good records and ended up being sold overseas.

But equally, of the 'reluctant' racehorses that I've owned, there's something that keeps you attached to every single one of them where they do become like family and that in itself is something pretty special.

So much like my actual family members... I simply couldn't pick a favourite!

What race is your favourite?

The Auckland Cup — it's an honour to be presenting one of New Zealand's most prestigious cups to owners and connections who dream about winning it. It's such a great thrill.

Is your love of racing a family affair — we've seen both your wife and daughters oncourse over the years...

Yes absolutely. My wife and our girls own a horse between them, and they'll always be along for the racedays. I'm told it's also a lot of fun buying a new dress for the day, so it's never been too hard to get them involved.

What's next for you (and by extension Barfoot & Thompson) in the world of sport?

I'm not sure what's next for us. We have a sponsorship portfolio that we're extremely proud to support at a local, regional, and national level. This includes various sports and charities like the Starship Foundation, arts, family and cultural events. In sport, I'll always be a huge supporter of rugby and netball, and the likes of Joelle King and Paul Coll, our squash superstars — there's plenty of excitement on the horizon. 🐾





CELEBRATING THE ONCOURSE
ART OF MILLINERY

Crowning Glory

A day at the races stands apart from other sporting events thanks to the fashionable ensembles donned by many when they join us trackside.

With the competition on the runway often as fierce as that on the racetrack, racewear has become a thriving industry in its own right and an important part of the overall experience on raceday.

WATCH | [Click here to view Love Racing's and ATR Ambassador, Caitlin O'Sullivan's chat with Eleanor about her year as The Ned Prix de Fashion winner.](#)

Eleanor Campbell, 2022 The Ned
Prix de Fashion Winner.





Left: Hannah Marinkovich & Carena West, ATR Fashion Ambassadors, oncourse

Right: Jill Humphries at Ellerslie as part of The Ned Prix de Fashion judging panel

Far right: One of Jill Humphries' millinery creations showcased as part of the SkyWalk Fashion Show to launch Auckland Cup Week in 2019

Below right: Jill's winning piece at Flemington's Oaks Day. Credit: Bryce Dunkley/ VRC Media

However, dress codes oncourse have been under scrutiny in recent months, with The Jockey Club in the UK removing dress codes at their 15 racecourses earlier in 2023. And in Racing Victoria's CEO Andrew Jones' speech at the 2023 Asian Racing Conference, he shared his view that dress codes could and should be removed.

The question of enforced dress codes aside, there is a certain joy in having an occasion on which it is encouraged to put your best foot (or hat) forward so to speak and it's a unique part of a day spent trackside. Whether or not a racecourse requires smart dress may come and go but in a world where casual dress is becoming the norm in all industries, there really is something special about presenting a 'different' version of yourself, even if just for the day.

When racegoers think racewear, it's hard to go past the millinery that's become intrinsically linked to the fashion oncourse. From a more understated headband to large Dior brim hats, there's a whole spectrum of headwear that graces racetracks across New Zealand (and beyond). And, excitingly, New Zealand can lay claim to the woman who's arguably one of the most successful milliners in Australasia, Jill Humphries.

Jill has close ties to Ellerslie, growing up in the area, with fond memories of running her school cross country on the Ellerslie track. Now based in Melbourne, Jill has provided hats to women all over the world, for both racewear and to more high-fashion clients, with her pieces featured in magazines like Harper's Bazaar and more.

Though she doesn't have a fashion background, Jill spent much of her early career in sponsorship and event marketing. A chance visit to the Melbourne Cup at Flemington saw her passion for millinery ignite and since then she's taken the industry by storm.

She is largely self-taught though she has spent some time at the Kangan Institute studying millinery. Jill is a fan of continuously upskilling, taking short courses as much as possible (even basket weaving!) whenever she can. By and large though, she credits her skill and success to plenty of trial and error with a sprinkle of Kiwi ingenuity. Her signature style for the majority of her career has been her leatherwork, another self-taught skill.

"I love that leather is seen as a hard and heavyweight material, yet if you treat it right you can make it look effortless, light and interesting."

It was her leatherwork prowess that saw her triumph at Flemington in 2014 with her incredible 'diving bird' piece (pictured right).

The accolades came thick and fast after that with Jill saying that it's hard to single out a career moment as her proudest.

"Winning the Millinery Award at Flemington's Oaks Day was spectacular. But every day I get new reasons to be proud. In recent months both Cartier and Harper's Bazaar have reached out – pinch me moments – but I am also so proud to receive a message from a client to say that her hat is amazing and it has just won fashions on the field at her local raceday."




Another milestone is her inclusion in the Royal Ascot Millinery Collective in 2019, the first ever international milliner to be recognised. The collection was created by some of the royal family's favourite designers — including Stephen Jones OBE and Philip Treacy OBE — and the addition of Jill's piece was a nod to the now-international flavour the event has.

With millinery only gaining in popularity, Jill has also seen a shift in the types of hats that garner attention. A recent move into creating unisex fedoras and leather berets opened up a new market for her business and clients as far away as New York were purchasing the berets to add to their wardrobes.

Closer to home, Monika Neuhauser created the millinery worn by the Supreme Winner of The Ned Prix de Fashion in 2022, Waikato's Eleanor Campbell. Eleanor furthered her winning ways making the National Final at the Lexus Melbourne Cup Carnival in the same outfit. Monika is perhaps best-known outside of racing circles for being the milliner that provided Jacinda Ardern with her headpiece for the Queen's funeral in 2022.

Our 2023 winner of The Ned Prix de Fashion, Lily Simons, wore a piece by Claire Hahn and as part of her prize will go on to Melbourne to compete at the Lexus Melbourne Cup Carnival. Claire is no stranger to Aussie success either, with Club fashion ambassador Carena West donning a custom Claire Hahn piece when winning the 2019 Myer Fashions on the Field competition in Melbourne.

With the new racing season upon us, we look forward to seeing headwear of all styles and sizes gracing the Ellerslie and Pukekohe tracks, both on and off the runway. Hats off to you all for dressing up and embracing all that a day at the races has to offer. 





“WE’RE ON A MISSION TO SEE THIS NEW CHAPTER IN ATR’S HISTORY BE ONE OF ACTION, WITH VERY TANGIBLE BENEFITS TO THE INDUSTRY REALISED FOR THE LONG-TERM BETTERMENT OF THOROUGHBRED RACING IN NEW ZEALAND. WE CAN’T WAIT FOR YOU TO JOIN US ON THE JOURNEY.”

Paul Wilcox, CEO
Auckland Thoroughbred Racing



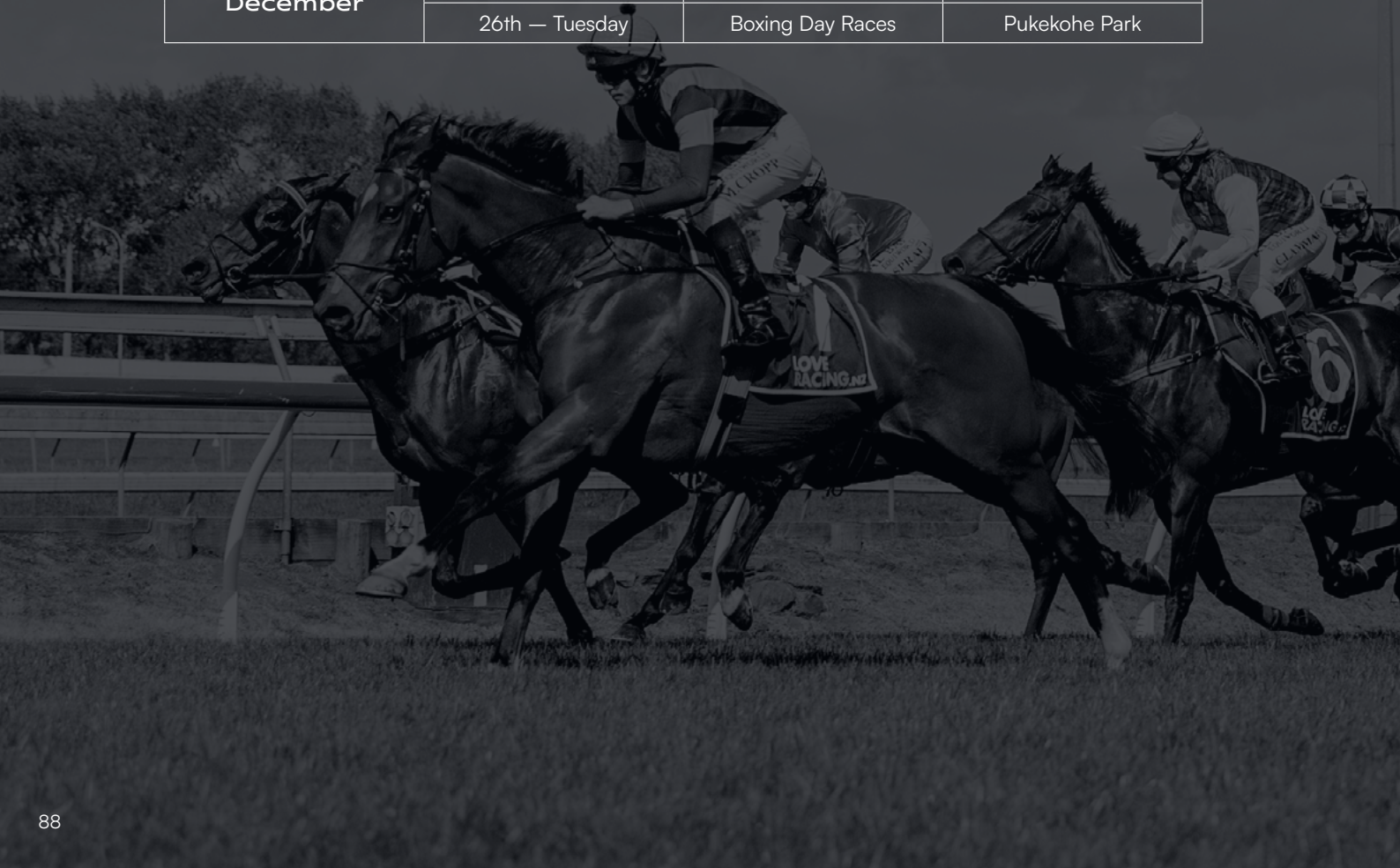
AUCKLAND THOROUGHBRED RACING

SINCE 1874

2023/24 Season

2023

MONTH	DATE	RACEDAY	VENUE
October	28th — Saturday	Cox Plate Day	Pukekohe Park
November	7th — Tuesday	Melbourne Cup Day	Pukekohe Park
	25th — Saturday	Counties Cup Day	Pukekohe Park
December	9th — Saturday	Bonecrusher Stakes Day	Pukekohe Park
	26th — Tuesday	Boxing Day Races	Pukekohe Park



2024

MONTH	DATE	RACEDAY	VENUE
January	1st — Monday	New Year's Day Races	Pukekohe Park
	14th — Sunday	Summer Raceday	Ellerslie (TBC)
	21st — Sunday	Pukekohe Park Raceday	Pukekohe Park
	27th — Saturday	TAB Karaka Millions	Ellerslie (TBC)
February	17th — Saturday	Avondale Cup & Guineas Day	Ellerslie
	21st — Wednesday	Pukekohe Park Raceday	Pukekohe Park
March	2nd — Saturday	Derby Day	Ellerslie
	9th — Saturday	Barfoot & Thompson Auckland Cup Day	Ellerslie
	20th — Wednesday	Pukekohe Park Raceday	Pukekohe Park
April	6th — Saturday	Pukekohe Park Raceday	Pukekohe Park
	20th — Saturday	Manco Easter Handicap Day	Ellerslie
May	22nd — Wednesday	Pukekohe Park Raceday	Pukekohe Park
	25th — Saturday	Auckland Futurity Stakes Day	Ellerslie
June	1st — Saturday	Pukekohe Park Raceday	Pukekohe Park
	19th — Wednesday	Ladies' Day	Pukekohe Park

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EXHILARATION
IS OUR
HERITAGE

