

Aidan rides family legacy

By Peter Foley

He comes across as unassuming, but beneath Aidan Keeley's easy-going surface is a steely determination shaped by racing bloodlines and a deep hunger to prove himself.

The source of that resolve is close to home. Aidan's maternal grandfather was Brian Rouse, one of the UK's leading flat riders of the 1980s.

Brian, who died last November aged 85, had a highly unusual career path, abandoning his first attempt to become a jockey to work as an electrician.

It meant 15 years passed between his first winner, in 1957, and his second, which came in 1972 when he was 31.

Once back in the saddle, he won a swag of top races, including the 1000 Guineas, before achieving his biggest success aboard Irish mare Stanerra in the Japan Cup.

Among his 38 Group successes, Brian Rouse won the Italian St Leger and Hong Kong Derby. He also rode Baronet to win the renowned Cambridgeshire Handicap twice.

In 2022, Aidan won the Cambridgeshire on Majestic. For the then 21-year-old, it was an early career peak, made even more special by his grandfather's connection to the race.

"I've been lucky enough, through racing, to meet a lot of people who had the pleasure of meeting him during his life, and they've always said nice things about him," Aidan said.

"So not even just from a riding perspective, but from a professional and personal perspective, he's definitely someone that I've always looked up to.

"It's nice to have someone that I can, hopefully, strive to be.

"I was never pushed into horse racing from a young age, but when I was getting towards the later end of my education, I decided that I would give horse racing a go and I attended the racing school in the UK.

"From then on, I just loved the aspect and the form of working horses and becoming a jockey."

Since beginning his professional riding career in October 2020, Aidan has ridden more than 100 winners.

Now 24, he has moved to Queensland in search of more opportunities, aided by respected jockey agent Adam Brook.

"I actually did a bit of stat digging a couple of weeks back and found that last year, in 2025, there were 18,500 declared horses that ran in the UK. In Australia, there were 185,000, so 10 times more runners and a lot more racing," Aidan said.

"It just is a lot more opportunity here. So I decided I'd make the move over here and moved over in the beginning of May. Now we're into August and a new season for Australia, so I've had a bit of experience already, and hopefully I can make a good first full season."

Aidan is raring to go but is biding his time until he can ride more often on the metropolitan tracks.

"Obviously, like most jockeys it'd be nice to get on better horses at better meetings, but I just have to see how things go," he said.



Coincide (right) begins his run from last at the furlong in the Vale Barry 'Keith' Self Handicap (800m) last Friday at Ipswich. With Jasper Franklin in the saddle, Coincide scored an amazing win. (Peter Foley)

"I'm very ambitious, although (he laughs) I don't currently have anything that I can give you that I'd like to aim towards.

"But I'm sure in six months'; time, I'll have a few things there in the back of my mind

I'd like to tick off. I'll just keep working hard and keep going at it.

"I'm waiting on my metro licence. I'm coming over here being an overseas rider;

they'd like to see me ride a little bit first at the provincial and country level.

"Having done that now for a little while, I've applied for my metro licence.

"I'd assume once we start going to the metro, there'll be lots of new ambitions to tick off."

At Ipswich recently, Aidan added another win to his record aboard the Scott Morrissey-trained Lumens Lenny in the Ipswich Tribune Today Handicap (1100m).

"I rode this horse in the Gold Coast a couple of weeks back, and I led on him, and that's kind of what he does," he said.

"That's kind of his gig being out near the front. I thought we were going a nice, generous pace and travelling up there on the leader's girth.

"He found a nice gear and picked up nicely."



Aidan Keeley (gold cap) encourages Lumens Lenny to overcome his rivals in the Ipswich Tribune Today Handicap (1100m). (Trackside Photography)



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