

Racing: a lifelong passion

By Peter Foley

For Marcus Wilson, racing is both family tradition and lifelong passion. With a natural affinity for horses and racing, he has built a career doing what he loves.

"My dad trained for 25 years so I've been born and bred into it, basically. It's a family business," Marcus said.

"I was always going to the stables at four o'clock in the morning before I went to school.

"As soon as I finished school, I was there and at the weekend went to the races.

"So once you're in, you're in. I couldn't see myself doing anything else.

"When you're brought up in the stables, it just becomes second nature.

"I've always had a love for animals, especially horses.

"You get a lot of bad publicity with the anti-racing people, but horses are loved in the industry."

Just turned 40, Marcus has already spent 20 years training racehorses.

His father, John Wilson, also grew up around horses and was similarly destined for a career in racing.

These days, he helps at Marcus's stable by driving trucks and doing most of the chiropractic work.

John rode track work for TJ Smith before training in the early 1980s, with success in Sydney and Brisbane, winning numerous country cups and feature races.

John later helped pave the way for his son, working as a chiropractor for Bart Cummings in Sydney and other leading trainers, including Graeme Begg.

Marcus learned from his father and trainers such as Bart, then built on that knowledge by working at Scone Vet Hospital and Arrowfield Stud in the Hunter Valley.

Started by John Messara in 1985, Arrowfield Stud is renowned for stallions including Danehill, Redoute's Choice and Snitzel.

"I was eager to go down there and see what it was all about. I think it was important to look at all aspects of horses, like working with the stallions," Marcus said.

"The veterinary side of it with the surgery, it gives you a good understanding of the horses' anatomy and their body and things like that.

"You never stop learning in the industry; even now, you pick up new things - different ideas.

There's no right or wrong way to train.

"Everyone has their own ideas, but you can take bits and pieces from everyone. You'll use it somewhere along the line.

"I was always going to go into training, which I did. I love it.

"Eventually I went out training on my own in 2006 in the Hunter Valley, with one horse basically.

"I had my first winner at Gosford."

Over the next seven years he built his stable, having success in the Northern Rivers and Sydney, before moving to Queensland 13 years ago.



Boris Thornton muscled Kalkanli towards the finish in the Great Northern Handicap (1980m). Sunny Disposition challenge them late, but Kalkanli held on to win. (Trackside Photography)

He initially came north temporarily after wet weather washed out meetings back home, but early success turned the move into a permanent one.

"Of the eight horses we brought up, five won so we stayed a bit longer. We had 12 winners from the first 20 runners up here," he said.

"I eventually ended up acquiring stables at the Gold Coast, so decided to make the move up here; closed the stables down there. We've had a lot of success up here."

He enjoys bringing horses to Ipswich, even more after Kalkanli's narrow win in last Thursday's Great Northern Handicap (1980m).

"We seem to have a lot of luck here. We ran second in the premiership one year to Gollan," he said.

"You can win from anywhere; lead or come from behind.

"It's only an hour up the road; it's a great track. It's not the biggest track, but it's got a great surface and good facilities."

Like any trainer, he would love to win a Group 1. The Melbourne Cup is the race that first comes to mind, although The Everest offers the big bucks.

"I just love horses and racing's my passion, so I don't mind where races are; I just like getting good results for owners, so they're happy and enjoy racing," he said.



The field jumps away for the Fertpro Maiden Plate (1690m). Favourite Bon Vader (red, white stars) was the winner for trainer David Vandyke and jockey Ryan Maloney. (Peter Foley)

"Obviously, you want to push to the pinnacle, but racing's become much stronger. There's not a lot of difference now between Sydney, Melbourne

and Brisbane.

"So any winners are very satisfying; wherever you can get a winner."



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