

Ipswich Racing

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Sugar Rush, (with Michael Schubert aboard) scores a narrow win at Eagle Farm on Boxing Day, 1970. Sugar Rush was trained by Ron Dillon, the trainer of Bore Head, who dead-headed with Isaacson to win the 1964 Ipswich Cup.



Michael rides Space Helmet to a barnstorming win at Eagle Farm on October 11, 1969 for trainer Percy Brown. (Michael Schubert) (Photos enhanced by AI)

Wild times: Michael's rides

By Peter Foley

Last week, Peter Foley introduced you to Michael Schubert, the jockey who rode the winner of the 1968 Ipswich Cup - Sombani - for Toowoomba trainer Norm McCallum. His story continues.

Michael started as an apprentice jockey with a winner for his master Reg Rowley at Beaudesert on a horse called Flake White.

The owner, Mal McGregor-Lowndes, would be notorious in years to come as the owner of Fine Cotton.

Michael's first win for his boss in Brisbane was on King's Victory, part-owned by Mal McGregor-Lowndes and the head of the Brisbane CIB, Don Buchanan.

The week before, he won on one of Don's horses and then Michael had a fall at Doomben after a jockey fell in front of him and he went over the top.

"As I was going down, I must have put my hands out and I broke both arms," Michael said.

"I had casts on for three months. While I was in hospital, on the Saturday night after the fall, Don walked in, got a chair and sat down.

"I said: 'It's nice of you to come up and see me.'

"He said, 'No, I'm not here for that. I'm here about your mother.'

Michael's Mum had been staying with him at a unit in Clayfield after his stepfather left her.

When she left to go there after she visited Michael in hospital, a 19-year-old man followed her and raped and strangled her.

"They got him and he got 15 years," he said.

"I said to Don: 'Just give me a gun and I'll blow his f***ing head off, because he'd taken the only thing I've got, my mother.'

"That knocked me about a bit for a long time. You never get over those things.

"My Mum was 52 when it happened."

Recently, he's had sad times losing friends, while other mates, former jockeys and trainers he visits, live in care with dementia.

"I've had a lot of mates fall off the perch. My best mate that I lost was a famous jockey Terry Lucas," he said.

Terry, who spent most of his career riding overseas, was top apprentice and jockey in the 1960s.

He was associated with some of the best horses ever to race in Queensland including Tails and Dalrello.

For several years, he was the number one rider for trainer Jim Atkins and rode more than 100 winners for him. Terry died in 2023.

By the time he was 21 and finished his apprenticeship, Michael was riding for major stables such as Fred Best and Roy Dawson, but the plum rides were hard to come by.

A turning point came when Norm McCallum asked him to move to Toowoomba to ride for him.

Norm and his wife, Doreen lived near the track, and when Michael moved up from Brisbane, they put a caravan in the backyard for him to live in.

He remembers the first Monday morning, when rain was coming down in bucketloads and



Michael unsaddling Space Helmet after the win, watched by the owners Mrs and Mr Brown.

Norm banged on the caravan door wanting him to start riding work.

"I thought, What have I got myself into?"

"Oh, geez, I can't live here for too long."

His thinking soon changed.

"He had 30 horses and he was training for a bloke called Carl Waugh, who started off Magic Millions.

"It was the best move I ever made, riding for Norm," he said.

"He was a good trainer. His brother was a good trainer too, Jack McCallum. He trained in Brisbane. Barry Stein rode for him. He was a great jockey.

"I had about 10 winners for Jimmy Atkins up there too.

"I got onto a bloke named Pat Lee and he asked me to go to Brisbane a couple of times, and lucky enough, they won.

"This other bloke Percy Brown, he had a horse called Space Helmet I won four on.

"Norm had a couple of handy ones I won on. I said to him: 'I reckon we can win the Weetwood and the Toowoomba Cup with these two horses.'

"They both ran second. I lot of big races I ran second: the Goldmarket, just got beat.

A good horse beat me called Kaoru Star. He finished up a champion.

"I was only a mediocre rider though, not like Mick Dittman or Larry Olsen.

"When I was riding, you got paid \$6 a ride. \$12

at Eagle Farm and Doomben."

To supplement his income, he drove forklifts, later rode in the west and eventually finished up riding in Mt Isa.

Michael was 37 when he stopped riding. Unsure what came next, he took a job driving trucks for Brisbane Livestock Transport and began another chapter in racing.

"Every morning, I'd go pick up Teddy Best and Billy Briscoe's horses. He used to have his stables on Nudgee Road, opposite Allen Street," he said.

"Then I used to go and get Billy Calder's. He used to have Chief de Beers.

"I used to start at half past two. Teddy Best wanted you there at a quarter to three.

"And we'd be parked out in Nudgee Road, waiting for the gates to open every morning.

"Teddy trained some good horses. Never had a lot; he'd have eight, but he trained horses like Symbolize and Charmosa.

"He was a great trainer, Teddy. He'd go to church every Sunday with his wife and wouldn't drink.

"And every year, at Christmas time, he gave me a big tin of Arnott's biscuits.

He laughed at the memory: "Without fail, every Christmas.

"And if he won a race, he put money in your pocket and he had good owners."

Michael marvels at the horses he carted over the years, including champions Kingston Town and Might and Power.

"You wouldn't get better horses sitting behind you on the truck, you know?"

While he was driving Kingston Town to a spelling paddock on a hot day, he stopped at a petrol station for a drink. He couldn't resist getting in the back of the truck to give The King a pat.

After he stopped driving trucks, he began driving jockeys to the races, starting with Michael Cahill, who retired last year.

Others included Luke Dittman, Noel Callow, Madeline Wishart, Jace McMurray, Dylan Turner and Martin Harley.

"I used to drive Paul Shailer when he was foreman for Chris Waller. When I was driving Paul, Peter Tighe got a lift with me a couple of times, Winx's owner," he said.

"During the winter carnival one time I had Peter Tighe and Trent Busuttin in the back at the same time."

He recently took a group of women to Cabarita and waited around for two hours while they had a spa and massage then drove them to Coolangatta for lunch.

One of them put \$500 in his pocket and asked if he was free on the Sunday. No, because a jockey had to be driven to the races.

Michael still comes to the races when a jockey needs a lift and he still takes a close interest in racing, following current and upcoming jockeys.

His favourites are Angela Jones and Cejay Graham. Like many older jockeys, he marvels at how short riders' stirrups are and how they have just their toes in the irons.