

Paul's lesson: be yourself

By Peter Foley

It's no surprise that Paul Shailer learned plenty from his time working with his fellow Kiwi Chris Waller about training horses and developing super-stables.

But maybe the most important lesson he learned was about himself.

Paul accepts that Chris Waller casts a long shadow over him. He spent 10 years working for Chris at Rosehill in Sydney and four years when Chris opened his Gold Coast stables.

"I respect Chris and admire what he's achieved as much as anyone else," Paul said.

"I'm always happy to talk about Chris and his success, and about how anal he is about his systems; the way he does things. There's a reason he's the best.

"No one works harder. He's meticulous and it's not a fluke that he's got to where he's got to."

Apart from his success on the racetrack, it's a source of fascination to many how Chris Waller manages to train so many horses; how his mind works.

"He makes a lot of sacrifices that most humans wouldn't make, when it comes to family and things like that," Paul explains.

"But I guess that's the sacrifice you make to be great. He's probably going to go down as the greatest trainer Australia's ever seen.

"He's very switched on; from the minute he wakes up. He's maybe a little bit obsessive- compulsive the way he goes about things.

"It's very repetitive and he's very focussed."

At Chris' stables in Rosehill, Flemington and the Gold Coast, everything is done the same way, at the same time.

Does Paul aspire to be like Chris Waller?

"No one's ever going to be Chris Waller," he said, simply. "I mean, we all aspire to be Chris, but no one's ever gonna be Chris.

"All I want to do is do the best that I possibly can, but I also want to be a good family man too; to be there for my wife and my children.

"I just want to work as hard as I can; train as many winners as I can."

Born in New Zealand, Paul Shailer started out as a jockey and rode a bit for Chris. But he had to give up because he became too heavy.

"At the same time, Chris just came over to Rosehill, so he asked me if I wanted to come over to Australia with him," he said.

"2000 we got there. Sydney Olympics. I was just a track rider for the first four years and then ended up as assistant trainer for six more years."

Chris recently described having to sleep in his car when he started, so Paul started with him when things weren't exactly glamorous.

"We had six horses when we first came over from New Zealand," he said.

"It was tough. Stressful, pressure. One of the best environments in the world; trying to break through. But just hard work. I guess, a bit of luck; it goes a long way, doesn't it?"

"We were joined at the hip for a long time. And we learned a lot about each other. Very healthy respect for each other, and, yeah, privileged to



Connections gather around Certify after his win in the Happy Birthday Matt Sharpe Plate. Birthday boy, Matt Sharpe, who backed the winner, is on the left. (Graeme Sharpe)

have been there for so long."

After playing a key role in the rise of the stable to one of the most dominant in Australian racing – including the heady days of Winx, Paul wanted a change.

"We'd got to the point where I think we had about 120 horses and I was in charge of all the staff; we had 52 staff," he said.

After setting up Chris' Gold Coast stables, he moved to Port Macquarie to train for a while.

Now he has a successful team of his own at the Coast.

At Ipswich racetrack last Monday, Paul won with Certify, a chestnut colt by Justify, who swaggered around the mounting yard before his race.

The handsome three-year-old, a \$150,000 buy at the Karaka sales, is part-owned by Winx' part-owner Peter Tighe, who is one of Paul's biggest supporters.

"He handles himself really well for a big colt," Paul said.

"He's a horse we're trying to get to the Queensland Derby.

"He's always shown us a fair bit of ability; we've just got to keep his mind focussed, because he's a colt who doesn't mind the ladies."



Derby-bound colt Certify, with Jag Guthmann-Chester in the saddle, surges to victory in the Happy Birthday Matt Sharpe Plate (1950m). (Trackside Photography)

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