

Simon says 'I love horses'

By Peter Foley

Gold Coast trainer Simon Foster, a born horse lover, says he doesn't like owners - though he's quick to point out that doesn't apply to them all.

Foster grew up in Melbourne and was working in stables while he was still in school, including for prominent trainer Robert Smerdon. Setting out on what would become a nomadic journey through the racing world, he first had a crack at becoming a jockey.

"I went over and started my apprenticeship in Adelaide, which didn't last because I obviously got too heavy," Foster said. "I finished my apprenticeship in Sydney; rode around Sydney."

He turned to training, had his first runner, Shazoom, at Ipswich in 2010 and welcomed his first winner two months later in Casino.

"I was lucky enough to have a good horse pretty early on," he said.

That horse was Trusted Partner, who won the 2011 Listed Lightning Stakes (1000m) at Eagle Farm, ridden by Dwayne Dunn. "Then I was offered a training job in Perth, so I went over there; won a couple of Group races in Perth."

His best success was the Group 3 WA Sires' Produce Stakes with Prentice in 2014.

A contract in South Korea followed, bringing further Group-level success.

"That gave me the opportunity to take a horse (Dolkong) to Dubai. We won a Group race and ran third in a Group 1 in Dubai," he said. "I think I'm the third Australian trainer to have a runner in the Dubai World Cup."

"I'll never back away from a challenge. You don't want to die wondering, do you?"

"When I was in Perth, I had 40 in work, and we had a lot of success over there. Even when I was in South Korea, I had 30 in work."

"And then, to be honest, it kind of soured me a little bit. I don't like owners."

Or perhaps he'd rather work with horses?

"I prefer to work with horses than people," he said, again stressing he didn't mean everyone.

His mate, Jimmy Livingstone is an exception. Jimmy was a part-owner of The Vowels, trained by Toby Edmonds, who won four in a row a few years ago.

"He owns a pre-fab joint here in Ipswich. He's had horses with me in the past," he said.

"I said, come and have a beer with me at the races. I enjoy that."

"Racing's changed since I was a kid. Now it's all about big syndicates."

"I'm probably getting too old for it. It's a young man's game now. It's all social media."

I do all that kind of stuff, but smaller trainers put a lot of hard work into our horses, and it goes unsung sometimes.

"But we're happy with what we're doing."

"I enjoy getting up in the morning, going down to see the horses. Now I've started riding again; I've got more time."

"I love the racing. I love training for the little



Cejay Graham (white cap, emerald green pom pom) sends Giddy Gan's Joy to victory in the Fertpro Handicap (2150m). (Trackside Photography)

blokes, love the horses."

Foster keeps a small stable now. He returned to Australia during Covid, spent time in Melbourne until restrictions eased, then settled on the Gold Coast.

At Ipswich racetrack last Thursday, Simon and Jimmy were drinking beers in the committee bar after Simon's horse Giddy Gan's Joy won with Cejay Graham aboard.

Giddy Gan's Joy is by American Pharoah out of Demerger, the 2005 Adelaide Cup winner who ran midfield in the Caulfield and Melbourne cups that year.

Giddy Gan's Joy was owned in Perth by Guy Jellicoe, who Foster said died recently.

His wife Pat now manages the ownership.

"She was named after Guy, because the grandkids couldn't say granddad, so it was Giddy Gan," Foster said.

She was nominated for the 2500 metre race on Ipswich Cup Day but didn't get a run.

"We had this as backup, so it's panned out really well," he said.

"She raced really kind for Cejay today. Cejay's won on her before."

"Hopefully, that's a sign that she's starting to



Light rain fell as Everybody Rise (left), with Group 1 jockey Taylor Marshall aboard, won the AVS Security Handicap (1100m). (Peter Foley)

work it all out now.

"She's a very hard horse to ride. Once you let her go, she'll just go."

"But I have started riding her the last month or so. She has started relaxing."

"Maybe it's me singing, maybe it's not."

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