

Invercargill Harness Racing Club Presidents Report - 2024

It is with much pleasure that I present my Presidents report summarising the clubs 2023-2024 racing season. As you will see from the attached financial statements the Club has been prudent through some difficult times and has recorded a surplus of \$74,214. Thirteen race meetings were held over the season.

I wish to make special mention of the great assistance our club has received from: Jason and the Southern Harness team, our Venue Manager - Warren Broad and his grounds staff, Lindsay Beer – who continues to work tirelessly in securing race sponsorship and our clubs hard working Secretary – Julie McEwan-Franks.

Our track remains one of the best all weather surfaces in New Zealand and only last month did we receive another glowing report from HRNZ National Track & Venue Inspector, John Denton. Race numbers for our meetings remain on a par with previous years and I believe the introduction of the “Iron Horse” bonus scheme has been a major factor in sustaining these numbers. The new Barn has also been greatly received and has been of huge benefit on our rain affected days. The next project for your club is the renovation of the main stand toilets – I’m sure you will agree that this is 20 years overdue.

Plenty of highlights on the track, the obvious being Cup Day and the Brent & Tim White trained American Me - providing Sarah O’Reilly her first Group 1 winner in the Ascot Park Hotel Invercargill Cup; Treacherous Gall’s emotional win in the inaugural Canada Stakes; Multiple Group 1 winner Oscar Bonavena’s win in the Brendan Franks Farrier David Moss Stakes, all cheered on by a huge crowd. Diamonds Day saw another fantastic crowd on course to view the premier racing, the locally bred, Telfer trained Built For Glory took out the Alabar Southern Supremacy Stakes final; Nathan & Matthew Williamson combined with Flying Ellie taking out the Macca Lodge/Nevele R Stud Southern Oaks and Beach Flybye winning the Regent Car Court Southern Cups final. Special mention must go to Mark Purdon’s complete domination of the Diamond Creek Farm 2yo Classic – again winning it, this year with the classy Rubira.

On Diamonds Day, Courtney Dempster was the lucky winner of the Coats and Schuck Jewellers diamond ring promotion and took home a ring valued at over \$5,000, this is a joint promotion between Coats & Schuck Jewellers and the Club. Trainer Jeremy Douglas earned the Setarip Syndicate (the oldest registered syndicate in NZ), the honour of being the inaugural winner of the Invercargill Harness Racing Club Ascot Park Iron Horse with their horse - Magic Sign. \$27,500 worth of bonuses were handed out as part of this scheme.

The club wishes to acknowledge the passing of some deeply loved participants (sadly there are too many to mention) that left us over the last year. The support provided on these occurrences is what makes our harness community a family and this is why we take great pride in supporting initiatives such as: Team Teal campaign (Ovarian Cancer research), Blue September (Prostate Cancer) and our local Hato Hone St John.

Plans for the new season; the \$100,000 Group 1 Ascot Park Hotel Invercargill Cup distance moves to 2700m and again will be a twilight event on Friday 20 December supported by a strongly staked undercard. A new group race, the \$40,000 Group 3 “The Dark Horse” for trotting mares will be run on Sunday the 20th of October and will be here to stay. The “Iron Horse” bonus is back again, and another big Diamonds Day is set for April. The Committee plans to keep stakes as high as possible throughout the season, in the 2023-2024 season \$40,000 was put into stakes top ups for our meetings.

At the end of the season, we introduced pre-race drinks for owners of horses racing on the day, owners were invited to come into the Presidents Room 15 minutes prior to their race to enjoy some hospitality courtesy of the club. This was well received and is being continued for the new season.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my committee, all the owners, punters, trainers and drivers that support our meetings. We look forward to seeing you all again this season.

Craig Heyrick – President, Invercargill Harness Racing Club.