

Invercargill Harness Racing Club Presidents Report – 2025

It is with much pleasure that I present to you my Presidents report from what is the 100th year of the club's existence. The Club was formed at a meeting of sixty people on 4 November 1924. Improvements began in 1962 that led to the installation of a five-furlong crusher dust track, the first of its kind in Southland. The all-weather track (1029m) was first used on 16 December 1970.

As you will see from the attached financial statements, the Club elected to invest some significant funds in the well overdue upgrading of our home - Ascot Park. We need to ensure it remains a complex that people want to come to – and this is the reason we have recorded a loss of \$150,491. Without the investment into the main grandstand toilet block we would've made a small loss.

The horses continue to break track records on the outstanding Ascot Park surface and it's a true credit to the efforts of our Venue Manager - Warren Broad and his grounds staff. His efforts and those of Jason, Julie, Nicole and the entire Southern Harness team have been awesome – this was further hi-lighted by their efforts - post the damage to our stables in October.

Plenty of highlights on the track, *Republican Party's* Invercargill Cup win, *Muscle Mountain's* David Moss, the freak 2yr old *Jumal's* Diamond Creek Classic win, *Five Crowns* Southern Supremacy and we must acknowledge the Jeremy Douglas trained marvel - *Magic Sign*, who showed his durability being crowned for the 2nd year running - the Ascot Park Iron Horse. This incentive scheme saw \$27,500 in bonuses being paid out. Race numbers for our meetings remain on a par with previous years and I'm sure the "Iron Horse" bonus scheme is a big factor in sustaining these numbers.

Some major movements on your committee with the retirement of our long serving treasurer – Murray Faul – Murray has been involved with the club for 80 years – the last 40 of those have been spent as treasurer. Whilst the passing of life member, committee man and true Ascot Park stalwart - Murray Brown rocked us all. Brownie's efforts have been recognised with the new barn and passing lane bearing his name. Two other sad losses were former Southland Times racing reporter – Jamie Searle and lifelong owner, breeder & trainer Ox McEwan.

It would be remiss not to mention the impact racing has on the local community and we are proud to play our part – hence why we continue to support: Team Teal campaign (Ovarian Cancer research), Blue September (Prostate Cancer) and our local Hato Hone St John. We are also privileged to have numerous memorial races held at our meetings.

Plans for this season...the twilight Invercargill Cup meeting is our obvious focus, and the Cup retains its group one status with a stake of \$100,000. We are nervous about the effect the Harness 5000 meeting on the following Sunday will have – nonetheless we are planning a strong supporting card with the Group 3 David Moss Trot, the Canada Stakes and the newly created Murray Brown mobile for 2yr old fillies. The "Iron Horse" bonus is back with a small change, and another big Diamonds Day is set for April.

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

Craig Heyrick – President, Invercargill Harness Racing Club.