

BUILDING AN EMPIRE

There's no 'accounting' for Driscoll's taste in trotters

BY AMANDA RANDO

ONE man's philosophy has been the active ingredient of success for leviathan owner/breeder Pat Driscoll.

And that one man wasn't just any man.

It was the late Paul Lasnick, a leading trainer in New South Wales up until his passing in 2009.

'Lasso', as he was fondly known, was respected amongst his peers, including Driscoll himself.

And when Driscoll first made the move to Sydney from Victoria, 'Lasso' played a pivotal role in Driscoll's involvement in harness racing, in more ways than one.

But it was perhaps what 'Lasso' said rather than what he did that had such an impact on Driscoll.

"His philosophy was that anyone can train a horse but not everyone can drive them, you need a good driver," Driscoll recalled.



Promising trotter Arboo

"And he often referred to that 'ginger-headed genius', as in Blake Fitzpatrick, as one of the best drivers going around."

And those words have stayed with Driscoll ever since.

Having only owned horses for a handful of years, Driscoll is now starting to reel in success thanks to trainer-driver Blake Fitzpatrick.

Just last Sunday, Driscoll and Fitzpatrick combined to win both Trotters NSW Breeders Challenge Finals at Tabcorp Park Menangle.

And both horses, Justines Amore and Parisian Chic, were bred by Driscoll himself.

But it has not been the smoothest of rides to get to this point.

Just over 11 years ago Driscoll founded the company Accountancy Insurance in Victoria and as the business expanded, shortly after he relocated to Sydney.

"I grew up on a farm in Victoria and my old man trained gallopers," Driscoll said.

"I had some shares in gallopers with my mates and knew a little about harness racing

"His philosophy was that anyone can train a horse but not everyone can drive them..."

because where I lived, there were a few trotters.

"But when I moved to Sydney, I wanted to become involved in racing but I didn't know anyone.

"Owning a galloper on my own wasn't viable and trotters are much more accessible and affordable."

But when Driscoll went to make his first purchase in harness racing, he 'shied' away from purchasing a trotter.

"They said that you can't have a trotter in Sydney, you need a pacer," Driscoll said.

So he went to the yearling sales, took on the advice, and purchased a half-sister to the well-performed Ball Gown by Astreos.

The filly went to Lasnick but shortly after, the Penrith Premiership-winning trainer was diagnosed with leukaemia.

"Paul was really sick and passed away before the filly raced," Driscoll said.

"I named the horse Lasnick Lass in his honour.

"When Paul was sick, I approached Paul Fitzpatrick and asked if he wanted to take

the horse but his stable was full at the time and so the filly ended up with Jim Bennett as his son Greg drove for Paul (Lasnick) at the time."

But even though Driscoll won a race with Lasnick Lass, she only had three starts before an injury forced her into early retirement.

"I've never had much luck with pacers, I bought one each year, and after this I decided to buy a trotter instead," he said.

"I have always preferred trotters mainly because I like the idea that it's an international sport – it's like the Rugby Union of the standardbred world.

"I then bought Bohemian Queen as a yearling and later I found out Blake Fitzpatrick and I were bidding against each other on the same horse."

Hammered down to Driscoll for \$20,000 at the Melbourne Australian Pacing Gold Sale, the daughter of Sundon and 17-time winner Queens Rhapsody went to Fitzpatrick's stables.

She won her first start at Menangle, and even though Bohemian Queen ended up



Yabby Dam Farms proprietor Pat Driscoll

having a few issues, it marked the beginning of a successful relationship.

Driscoll now races a "bunch" of trotters across Australia and New Zealand with quite a few in Fitzpatrick's barn.

And apart from last weekend's feature double success, Driscoll and Fitzpatrick have enjoyed a good season with other trotters including Vincennes, who recently won the Bendigo Cup as well as the Wagon Apollo Free-For-All; Fiery Mountain Girl, who won the NSW Derby and finished third in the NSW Oaks; My Valerie; Hudson Bay; and Ballyronan, to name a few.

But Driscoll also has some other nice trotters with other trainers including the promising Arboe, who has won five of her six starts and also French stallion Used To Me, who are both with up-and-coming horseman Anton Golino.

And this is just the beginning of a trotting empire Driscoll is starting to build across Australasia.

He is one of the biggest breeders of trotters in the Southern Hemisphere with more than 50 mares across Australia and New Zealand.

The proprietor of Yabby Dam Farms recently found-

ed the company Haras des Trotteurs, bringing frozen semen from European stallions into Australasia.

He has visited France and Scandinavia regularly over the past five years and has grown a liking to the mixed French and American trotting breed.

"I've always liked the breeding side of things and now it's about reducing the ones I have and having quality," Driscoll said.

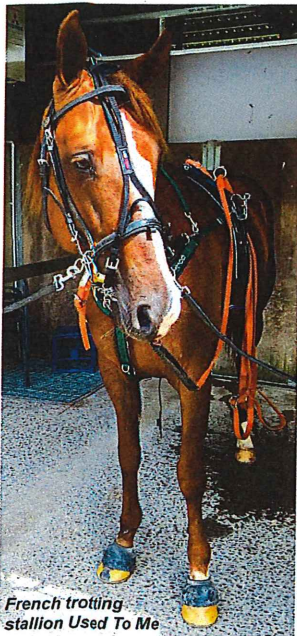
"I particularly like the overseas influence with horses by European sires and the Franco-American bloodlines.

"European trotting stallions haven't really been available in Australia, there has been a bunch, and hopefully this can grow."

And just how his business Accountancy Insurance is growing throughout Australia, New Zealand and now to North America, so is Driscoll's love for trotting.

The 57-year-old recently purchased a property in Ballarat, Victoria, to set up as training and breeding facility in the future.

But for now, Driscoll plans to stay in Sydney before heading back to settle in his home state once again.



French trotting stallion Used To Me



Pat Driscoll's three-pronged attack in the NSW Breeders Challenge Two-Year-Old Trotters Final