



Thanks for the memories

By **AMANDA RANDO**

AS SHE looks across the paddock and watches a non-distinct looking gelding grazing in the field, Natalie Rasmussen realises she has made the correct decision.

The subject of Rasmussen's attention is champion pacer Blacks A Fake, which was retired a fortnight ago.

Rasmussen made the surprise announcement after Blacks A Fake finished second behind Georgetown in the Group One Winter Cup at Albion Park.

With his shoes taken off, Rasmussen is overwhelmed with a sense of relief that the 10-year-old ended his career soundly.

Making the choice to retire such an animal would not be easy, especially considering the great memories Rasmussen shared with the son of Fake Left.

Some of them were history defying moments that may never be repeated.

Then there is the fact Blacks A Fake has been a big part of Rasmussen's life for the last decade.

Rasmussen admits, however, she expected little from the pacer when he first arrived at her stable.

Bred by the late Ron Pointer, who owned Egmont Park Stud in the famous Darling Downs in southern Queensland, the "weedy" black colt was born in September 2000.

The foal was a son of Fake Left and the Vanston Hanover mare, Colada Hanover.

Fake Left stood most of his stud career at Egmont Park Stud, as was the case with Vanston Hanover, before his death in 2001.

Colada Hanover was bred by Pointer and was also born at Egmont Park Stud. She only won three races during her 37-start career, however, has managed to eclipse her meagre feats in the breeding barn.

Her first three foals all won, with the offspring including outstanding Queensland juvenile Lord Of The North - by Fake Left.

Blacks A Fake is Colada Hanover's fourth foal.

Pointer, who bred 'Blackie' under the banner of R.H. Pointer Nominees Pty Ltd, passed away more than six years ago, with widow, Helen, retaining a share in Blacks A Fake.

Before Pointer's passing, he was approached by takeaway shop owner Trevor Titcomb and his friend, Vic Rasmussen, who were interested in buying some yearlings.

Pointer was sick at the time, so allegedly asked studmaster Mark Lichtwark to pick out three horses for Trevor and Vic.

And it just so happened to be that one of those three yearlings was the son of Fake Left and Colada Hanover.

The shares went to Trevor and Vic's wife, Cheryl.

Soon after, Vic gave the colt to his oldest daughter Kylie to break-in, during which time he was gelded and named Blacks A Fake.

"My older sister broke him in and he was a little grub," Natalie Rasmussen recalled.

"He was a little tiny weed and he would gallop all the time - you would have never thought he was going to turn into the horse he did.

"I drove him in his first trial at Redcliffe and he won by a few lengths running his last quarter in 27 seconds, jogging.

"That's when I realised he was a nice horse - he showed plenty of dash, I just didn't know how much bottom he had.

"I told mum and dad this is the best horse we've ever had and I don't think they believed me at the time."

A week later, Blacks A Fake made his debut at the Gold Coast.

It was Wednesday August 6, 2003 - a date that meant nothing at the time as little did onlookers realise they were witnessing the beginning of the greatest career in the Southern Hemisphere.

Driven by Natalie, Blacks A Fake managed to beat the favourite Arkareena by a head in 1:58.7.

Blacks A Fake was restricted to four starts as a two-year-old, which included three wins and a third.

Spending six months away from the races, Blacks A Fake made a winning return as a three-year-old.

In fact, he won his first six starts, which included his first feature victory - the Qbred Breeders' Classic beating the likes of Mister Martini and Romeos Legend.

A month later he collected his second major when triumphant in the Qbred Triad Final - Queensland's Sires' Stakes race.

Starting at 3/1, Blacks A Fake raced outside the leader, 9/10 favourite Slipnslide.

With the final quarter of the last mile covered in 27.2 seconds, Blacks A Fake beat the favourite by a half-head to claim the Group Two in a mile rate of 1:59.5.

"That was the defining moment in his career when he beat Slipnslide in the Sires' Final," Rasmussen declared.

"He was still a little grub always galloping in track work right up until this win, but he showed that night that he was something special."

Tragedy struck soon after the event, with Blacks A Fake's campaign cut short by injury.

Developing a curbed hock as well as injuring a hind suspensory, the promising pacer missed his four-year-old season as a result.

Although Blacks A Fake missed 17 months, Rasmussen looks back at the testing time as a blessing in disguise.

"It was most definitely a God send," Rasmussen said.

"We put him in the paddock for 12 months and he just roughed it.

"With the time off he came back a completely different horse.

"He went out as a weed and came back as a nice big horse.

"He went from having a high head-check to not wearing one at all and also took a much longer hopple."

Blacks A Fake bounced back from his forced lay-off with a dominant win as an early five-year-old.

That was also his first start under Rasmussen's care, prior to that he was trained by her father Vic.

This season was one of the most prominent in Blacks A Fake's career.

After winning his first six starts in his home state, he ventured south to Victoria on his pioneering interstate trip in preparation for the 2006 Inter Dominion series in Tasmania.

Blacks A Fake had five starts in Victoria for two wins and two seconds.

He then continued south to Tasmania to tackle the Inter Dominion.

After winning his opening heat in 1:55.5 at Hobart, Blacks A Fake ventured to Launceston where he finished 10th to Slipnslide, only beaten by nine metres.

He qualified for the lucrative Final by winning his third heat over 2579 metres in 1:57.6, earning favouritism for the Final in the process.

History shows Blacks A Fake won the \$1.5million Final, covering the last mile of the 2579-metre event in 1:58.3.

Karloo Mick finished a metre-and-a-half away in second, with Slipnslide close behind in third.

Rasmussen became the first reinswoman to capture the Inter Dominion Final.

"When we went to Tasmania we were just happy to pick up a few cheques in the heats of the Inter Dominion - we didn't realise how good he was going to go," Rasmussen stated.

"It was a huge effort to win in Hobart.

"That season he went from a C4 to winning the Inter Dominion."

Given two months off, Blacks A Fake continued his feature race haul, winning the Four and Five-Year-Old Championship and the Winter Cup at Albion Park.



Blacks A Fake winning the Hunter Cup in world record time is one of Natalie Rasmussen's favourite memories with the gelding.



Lucas Rando, holding the 2010 Inter Dominion trophy after Blacks A Fake's win at Tabcorp Park Menangle, is just one of many fans that will miss watching the great pacer race.

He was then invited to contest the SEW-Eurodrive Miracle Mile at Harold Park, where he finished second behind Be Good Johnny in a mile rate of 1:54.3.

Blacks A Fake then won the M H Treuer Memorial and the Victoria Cup before successfully defending his Inter Dominion title at Globe Derby in 2007.

Given a short spell following a gruelling campaign, Blacks A Fake had a handful of starts including a second win in the Winter Cup at Albion Park, however, the outbreak of Equine Influenza interrupted the rest of this preparation.

Blacks A Fake was one of the first horses in Queensland to contract the dreaded virus that crippled racing across Australia for a several months.

Like a true champion, 'Blackie' bounced back, winning feature races seemingly at will, including the 2008 Hunter Cup at Moonee Valley.

Securing the \$400,000 Group One with an emphatic last stride triumph, 'Blackie' set a world record by rating 1:58.9 for the 3000 metres, after beginning from a 30-metre handicap.

"His Hunter Cup win is one that stands out the most to me because he went enormous," Rasmussen declared.

Just a month later, Blacks A Fake won his third Inter Dominion Final, this time at Moonee Valley to equal Our Sir Vancelot's record of three victories.

Blacks A Fake was denied history the following year when finishing second to Mr Feelgood at Albion Park.

Blacks A Fake bounced back to capture the 2010 Inter Dominion Final at Tabcorp Park Menangle.

Blacks A Fake became the first competitor to win four Inter Dominion titles – achieving the feat in a world record time of 1:53.8 for the 2300 metres.

"Winning the fourth Inter Dominion was great – you just can't put it into words," Rasmussen said.

"All you're ever after is just one Inter Dominion, but to win four is just unexplainable.

"I had an overwhelming sense of pride in him."

That wasn't to be Blacks A Fake's last major milestone.

Later that year he finished second in the 2010 Miracle Mile behind Smoken Up at Tabcorp Park Menangle in 1:50.3, beaten a half-head.

His \$75,000 cheque saw Blacks A Fake become the world's richest pacer with earnings of \$4,329,607.

Soon after, Blacks A Fake embarked on his first overseas trip to contest the Auckland Inter Dominion in New Zealand.

After finishing fourth and second in his respective heats, 'Blackie' finished third in the Final won by Smoken Up.

Blacks A Fake became the first horse to qualify for six Inter Dominion Finals.

Returning to Queensland, Blacks A Fake was given five more starts, which included three wins and two placings.

His last win was in the Sunshine Sprint on July 16, 2011, at Albion Park, with his second in the Winter Cup coming a week later.

Blacks A Fake was retired with a record of 72 wins and 24 placings from 105 starts for earnings of \$4,535,438.

"It's been a big ride with this horse," Rasmussen declared.

"I've had a lot of great moments with him.

"The owners of the horse let him be as good as he is – if it wasn't for them, he wouldn't have made it as far.

"They did what was right for him throughout his career and I couldn't have asked for anymore."

Below: Blacks A Fake holding out Monkey King to win his record fourth Inter Dominion Final at Tabcorp Park Menangle in 2010.

Top left: Blacks A Fake ready to pounce in the final lap of the 2010 Inter Dominion at Tabcorp Park Menangle.

Is he the greatest?

By **AMANDA RANDO**

BLACKS A FAKE - is he the greatest standardbred to grace a racetrack?

That is the question most harness racing enthusiasts have come across at one time or another.

And the debate was sparked again when Blacks A Fake's retirement was announced a fortnight ago.

Of course it is hard to compare horses from the past with those of the present, but in Blacks A Fake's case some of his amazing feats lean the argument in his favour.

Does this put Blacks A Fake ahead all the other champions?

In a survey conducted by this publication last June, our expert panel rated Blacks A Fake as the second greatest male standardbred produced in Australasia.

Victorian pacer Popular Alm was voted number one – or for the sake of the exercise – the King.

However, premier horseman Brian Hancock disagrees.

Hancock has had his fair share of experience with outstanding performers, but rates Blacks A Fake as the best.

"I don't think I've seen a better horse," the six-time Inter Dominion winner said.

"I've been involved with some nice horses over the years like Our Sir Vancelot, who won three Inter Dominions, but Blackie is just something else.

"He has a phenomenal record which speaks for itself."

An in-depth look into Blacks A Fake's career might help you decide.

Retired at the age of 10, the son of Fake Left earned \$4,535,438 in stakes, making him the world's richest pacer.

He surpassed Gallo Blue Chip's record of \$4,260,959 when finishing second to Smoken Up in the SEW-Eurodrive Miracle Mile at Tabcorp Park Menangle last November.

Winner upon debut at the Gold Coast, Blacks A Fake clocked a noteworthy 1:58.7 – but little did onlookers realise what was to come.

As they say in the classics "so much water has passed under the bridge since then", with Blacks A Fake's subsequent 104 starts netting 72 wins.

Of course, his most noted victories are his record four Inter Dominions.

Blacks A Fake's initial Inter Dominion triumph was registered at Hobart in 2006.

That was followed by Adelaide in 2007, Melbourne in 2008 and Sydney in 2009.

In between, the 'Master Blaster' finished second behind Mr Feelgood in Brisbane.

Last April Blacks A Fake finished third behind Smoken Up and Im Themightyquinn in the Auckland Inter Dominion Final.

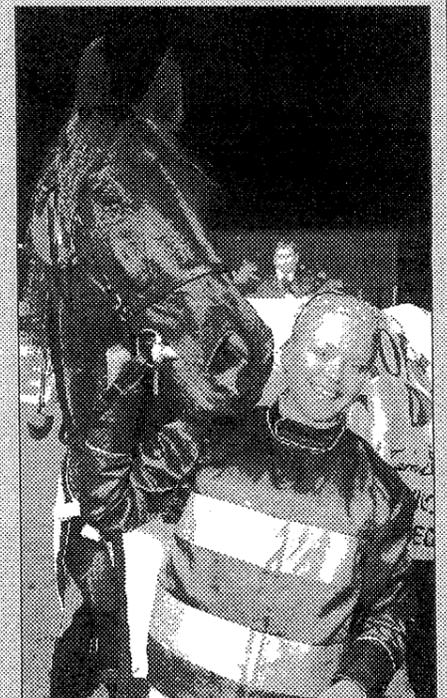
Blacks A Fake created another record simply by appearing in the Group One – with the veteran becoming the first competitor to qualify for six Inter Dominion Finals.

Some of these achievements may never be repeated, or at least, not in the foreseeable future.

So again the question is asked, is Blacks A Fake the greatest?

BLACKS A FAKE'S GROUP ONE APPEARANCES

- 2006 1st Inter Dominion (Hobart)
- 2006 2nd Miracle Mile (Harold Park)
- 2006 1st Treuer Memorial (Bankstown)
- 2006 1st Victoria Cup (Moonee Valley)
- 2007 1st Inter Dominion (Globe Derby)
- 2007 2nd Ballarat Cup (Ballarat)
- 2008 1st Hunter Cup (Moonee Valley)
- 2008 1st Inter Dominion (Moonee Valley)
- 2008 1st Queensland Pacing Championship (Albion Park)
- 2008 1st Trans-Tasman (Albion Park)
- 2008 5th Miracle Mile (Harold Park)
- 2008 6th Victoria Cup (Moonee Valley)
- 2009 2nd Inter Dominion (Albion Park)
- 2009 1st Queensland Winter Cup (Albion Park)
- 2009 1st Queensland Pacing Championship (Albion Park)
- 2009 7th Miracle Mile (Tabcorp Park Menangle)
- 2009 3rd Victoria Cup (Melton)
- 2010 1st Inter Dominion (Tabcorp Park Menangle)
- 2010 4th Queensland Pacing Championship (Albion Park)
- 2010 2nd Miracle Mile (Tabcorp Park Menangle)
- 2010 2nd Treuer Memorial (Bankstown)
- 2011 3rd Inter Dominion (Alexandra Park)
- 2011 2nd Winter Cup (Albion Park)



Natalie Rasmussen with Blacks A Fake after winning the 2006 Victoria Cup at Moonee Valley.

