

Wayne Campbell farewells once-in-a-lifetime Chip Del

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Wayne Campbell is forever thankful of the day he first laid eyes on his pride and joy, Chip Del.

Campbell was born into the industry, with his family re-locating to Queensland from Tamworth in the mid-1960s, and the bug to be around horses was always there for a young Wayne.

“I used to help Dad as soon as I could walk, I was riding horses when I was three-years-old and that’s where my passion for the industry started,” Campbell said.

“I did a heap of stints around various stables in Queensland to build up my experience, and then started to get a few of my own which served as a learning curve for me.”

Soon came an interest in breeding, and with that a horse that would forever change his life.

“My parents owned a mare called Del Garris and Dad only ever bred a couple so I thought that I would have a go at it,” Campbell said.

“A friend of mine, Jamie Brown, was into breeding, and he said that Bernie Wilson had a stallion coming out called Brutus Blue Chip who would probably be alright for our mare – he was a bit of a fanatic about his breeding so we trusted him on that.”

The resulting foal was named Chip Del, born on August 27, 1982.

Last week – at age 38 – Chip Del passed away, but not before a journey that changed the Campbell family’s life forever.



"Her nickname was Tina; my wife comes from a musical family and she loved Ike and Tina Turner so that was her nickname from day one," Campbell said.

"She was a beautiful foal, everything you did with her was absolutely no dramas, she just up and went doing her own thing.

"I had a mate called Mick Donovan and he was training at Redcliffe, so I started working her with him just to have a little see how she'd go and she really just took off."

That day, Campbell thought that Chip Del was something special, something that he had never trained or driven – and he was right.

Tina was a force to be reckoned with throughout the 80s, amassing 98 starts for 16 wins and 27 minor placings, banking more than \$100,000 in stakes along the way, as well as two Sires Stakes races and a Breeders Stakes.

"One day we worked her and she beat Mick's horses that didn't go too bad, and from there we gave her a first start in a race in November 1984 where she ran third to Henry Luca, who was a really handy horse with Kevin Thomas," Campbell said.

"After that we spelled her and gave her six weeks off, and then from there she came out and won the 1985 Queensland Breeders Stakes second-up after running second in the heat.

"There was a good mare called Leslie Bell who was all the rage at the time, and she beat us in the heat but we came out and got her in the final two weeks later."

Two months later, the harness fraternity started to really take note of Chip Del, running second in the 1985 Sires Stakes semi-final to the talented Stewart Dickson-trained Simply Stunning, before claiming a devastating 12-metre victory in the Triad Final.



"That's when she really stamped herself as a genuine star, and she then went on to win the 1986 3YO Sires Stakes in March the next year – it was a dominant era for her," Campbell said.

"The only thing I regret is not starting her in the Queensland Oaks or taking her south to compete.

"The Sires Stakes she won would have to be what I'm most proud of with her, but personally for me to be driving her when she won the Queen Of Hearts in 1987 was a career highlight for myself."

Reflecting on her period of dominance, Campbell always knew that Chip Del had something special about her, and when it was grand final time, he had the trick to ensure she was primed and ready to go.

“She was a really intelligent mare, and the good ones have that brain – she just had that coolness about her,” Campbell said.

“Her first few starts she used to come from the back, but from there she used to always be able to park herself in the death seat and switch off.

“When they knew she was coming then they knew they had to let her go otherwise she would just destroy them.

“Before the big races, you’d just give her a little slap on the bum and that’s all she needed to know that the big races were coming – it was my way of telling her that this is when we change gears.

“It’s something I’ve never experienced before.”

Chip Del was retired in July 1989, two short of 100 starts, with Campbell taking her to a final race in Rocklea to ensure that her stakes earnings surpassed the \$100,000 mark.



Campbell tried his hand breeding with Chip Del post-racing, and at the age of 25 when she started to slow up, she was given free reign of the property to be close by the family at any given time.

In recent years, her eyesight started to go, but her health remained intact as she continued to enjoy the carefree lifestyle of the Campbell property, but as she ticked past her 38th birthday, the family knew that her time may soon come.

“Up until about a month ago, she used to love getting down to roll but at 38 we thought one day she just won’t be able to get herself back up, and the other week that’s exactly what happened,” Campbell said.

“At that point we knew, that’s when she’d had enough – and that’s when we said goodbye to her.

“We buried her here on the property, so she’ll always be here with us.

“I think she just loved being with us, and she trusted us – we just had a bond and she just enjoyed living life every day.”

In the wake of Tina’s passing, Wayne’s daughter Sam organised a special tribute to their beloved mare, contacting the Albion Park Harness Racing Club to name a race after Chip Del – unbeknownst to her father.

On the evening of Saturday, October 3, the 2138-metre Remembering Chip Del Open Pace took centre stage at Albion Park, fittingly featuring a handful of the state’s top-class pacers.

Up-and-coming pacer Ashley Locaz reversed the result on their last start over reigning Queensland Horse of the Year Colt Thirty One, scoring a thrilling one-metre victory in a run reminiscent of Chip Del sweeping down the outside from the one-one position.

“My daughter Sam organised the race to be named after her last Saturday night,” Campbell said, holding back tears.

“I had handled everything okay after Tina passed but when my daughter told me what she’d done I just broke down – that’s what got me.

“After everything we went through with her passing, it was that moment that really got me.

“I was so proud of Tina, and I was so proud of my daughter.

“My kids grew up around the racetrack, and they experienced the highs and the lows with me so I just could not have been prouder of Sam when she did that for both Tina and myself.”

The Campbell family had long been prepared for the day that their beloved Tina would depart, and it allowed them to reflect on the once-in-a-lifetime journey that she took them on.

Her achievements almost single handily financed a life for Wayne’s wife and children, and for that he will be forever in debt to his best mate Tina.

“She put me on the map, and financially she paid our first house off and then paid off our stables – she set us up for life,” Campbell said.

“I just liked having horses that had a run around and enjoyed what they were doing, but she changed everything for us.

“She showed that the little guys can still be competitive at the top level, she just took us on an excitement ride – it was just something you dream of but will never actually happen to you.

“When you get a mare like Tina, you learn to appreciate it because they can just turn your life around.

“She put my girls through private schools, and they’re both so successful now which is all thanks to Tina – that’s why she was so loved and appreciated.”

