

August
2026

BEYOND THE CROWN

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BATHURST - JULY RACING RECAP



Paula Sapio after her first driving treble (Image credit: Coffee Photography)

Bathurst hosted a busy month of harness racing during July, with dominant driving performances, several significant upsets, emerging young horses and more than a few finishes that required a careful look at the photo.

McLean was the standout horse of the month, completing a July hat-trick, winning on each of his three appearances at Bathurst. The seven-year-old began his run with victory in the Barkers Butchery Meat Raffle Pace on 1st of July, scoring at \$9.50 after settling behind the leader. He returned one week later to win again on 8th of July and completed the hat-trick in the Town and Country Rural Supplies Pace on 22nd of July.

Paula Sapio partnered McLean in all three victories, establishing one of the month's most successful horse-and-driver combinations. Paula enjoyed one of the strongest individual meetings of the month when she drove a treble on 17th of July. Her winners were Yareadyfreddy, favourite Lexy Longstockings, and \$21.70 chance Bettor Brilliance, who supplied one of July's largest upsets.

The same meeting also produced the closest and most dramatic finish of the month. The Dome, driven by Travis Bullock for trainer Peter Keogh, prevailed by only 0.1 metres over Surfin At Midnight, with Tulhurst Pebbles a further 0.1 metres away in third.

Jett Turnbull topped the July driving tally with 13 wins, highlighted by two four-win programs. He opened the month with victories aboard Ronzel Sonny, Runkle, Cheval Tiger and Onedarknight NZ on 1st of July and then closed July with another quartet on 29th of July, driving Clear Left, Divine Girl, Machzine Mahoney and A True Phenomenon to victory. His ability to win with horses from several different stables was a notable feature of the month.

WHAT'S COMING UP!

AUGUST:

Members draw & race night -

Wed 12th Aug (\$1960)

Nutrien Sale race HEATS -

Wed 19th Aug

Nutrien Sale race \$50,000 FINAL -

Wed 26th Aug

Race night -

Fri 28th Aug

SEPTEMBER:

Meat raffle & race night -

Wed 2nd Sep

Members draw & race night -

Wed 9th Sep

Race night -

Wed 16th Sep

Race night -

Wed 23rd Sep

Race night -

Wed 30th Sep

OCTOBER:

Meat raffle & race night -

Fri 9th Oct

Members draw & race night -

Wed 14th Oct

Race night -

Wed 21st Oct

Race night -

Wed 28th Oct

**MEMBERS
BADGE DRAW**

Drawn every
second
Wednesday of
the month!

All the Proceeds
from the Meat
Raffle go
towards the
Members Draw.

If the prize is not won, it will be put
towards the Jackpot the next month.
You **MUST** be on course to claim the
cash!

BEYOND THE CROWN

The largest tote dividend identified across the July meetings belonged to Duffy Hollow, who returned \$24.50 when winning the opening race on 15 July. Driven and trained by Nathan Turnbull the nine-year-old gelding defeated Pas De Cheval and King Bobbie in the Bedwells Feed Barn Pace.

Persistence paid off for A True Phenomenon, the Trent Rue-trained pacer began the month with a second placing behind Onedarknight NZ in the maiden, then finished fourth at his next Bathurst appearance and returned on 29th to break through for his first win, driven by Jett Turnbull.

The month's three-year-old races also produced wins for horses including Studleigh Fury, Cheval Tiger, Smooth Buckaroo, Tiger Jewel, Interestinme, Awicked Woman, Jewel Heaven and Divine Girl, providing supporters with several names to follow through the remainder of the season.

Ideal Timing produced one of the sharpest early-month performances when he won over 1,730 metres on the 1st of July in a mile rate of 1:54.4. He backed that result up with another Bathurst victory on the 22nd of July.



Jett Turnbull in the drivers seat on A True Love (Image credit: Coffee Photography)

A True Love deserves a special mention, the four-year-old mare ran third at \$151 on the 1st of July before winning over 2,260 metres on the 8th of July for connections.

July at a glance

- Meetings conducted: 6
- Races conducted: 57
- Leading driver: Jett Turnbull – 13 wins
- Horse of the Month: McLean – three Bathurst victories
- Mare of the Month: Sweet Dreams NZ – back-to-back wins on 1 and 8 July
- Fastest 1,730-metre mile rate: McLean – 1:54.0 on 8th July
- Fastest 2,260-metre mile rate: Alta William – 1:57.5 on 29th of July
- Value result of the month: Duffy Hollow
- Closest finish: The Dome – 0.1 metres

AUGUST MEAT RAFFLE WINNERS AND THE MEMBERS DRAW JACKPOTTED TO \$1960

Once again we held our monthly meat tray raffle, thanks to Barkers Butchery! This month our winners were; Bryanna Hewitt, Brad Asimus, Wayne White and Veronica Fisher.

The proceeds from the meat tray raffles each week go towards our monthly Member's draw, which hasn't gone off since May. The cash prize is now worth \$1960. Sign up as a member before the draw on Wednesday 12th of August for your chance to win!





BULLDOG HANOVER

FEATURE RACE DATES

AUGUST:

Nutrien Sale race HEATS -

Wed 19th Aug

Nutrien Sale race \$50,000 FINAL -

Wed 26th Aug

DECEMBER:

Carnival of Cups -

Fri 11th Dec

Boxing Night & Shirley Turnbull

Memorial -

Sat 26th Dec

Oberon Night

Wed 30th Dec

MARCH:

Gold Crown Carnival

Tiara & Bracelet heats -

Wed 17th Mar 2027

Crown and Challice heats -

Fri 19th Mar 2027

Yealing Sale -

Sun 21st Mar

All Abilities Day & Culcutta -

Mon 22nd Mar 2027

Ladies Night -

Wed 24th Mar 2027

Honouree Dinner -

Thur 25th Mar 2027

Gold Crown Carnival finals night

Sat 27th Mar 2027

APRIL:

Soldiers Saddle -

Wed 21st Apr

CHAIRMAN- Rod Smith

VICE CHAI- Sarah Hunter

TREASURER- Lachlan Cisco

DIRECTORS- Wayne White, Fiona McWilliam, John Coffey, Dyanna Thommeny

CALLING IT- WITH BK

Blissful Lover: It has been a fruitful month for the Gary Thorncraft racing operation with his star 3YO, Yottie running another minor placing in another Derby, but it was a 2YO that burst onto the scene at Bathurst on the 15th July that has set tongues wagging after returning a brutal 55.5 last half to score by 18.5m. Owned in conjunction with Peter Nugent, Mick Boots and the Toole Family, with his win at Menangle the subsequent week, the Stay Hungry Gelding has produced a meteoric rise to the start of his career under the watchful eye of Mat Rue. His targets forward will be the upcoming NSW Breeders Challenge series, with the main set of heats to commence on 23rd September at Bathurst.

Rowley Mint: Many were wondering when this runner would finally break through and score his maiden victory and it felt only a matter of time with eye catching runs week after week for the son of Jr Mint. In the most recent July Super Maiden, fate finally converted into reality as the gelding was too strong for Judah over the concluding stages. Under the care of Peter Wood, the horse then put in an eye-catching 3rd over the short course trip the following week, once again out of the draw but strong through the line, beaten less than 3m by the very much in form Dun Spruikin. His progression will be of particular interest having raced for much of his career out of the main draw.



Trainer and driver Peter Wood on Rowley Mint after their win on July 15. (Image credit: Coffee Photography)

Articles written by:

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Edited by: Holly Newson



Our Uncle Sam and Anthony Frisby winning the Bohemia Crystal FFA (Image credit: HRNSW)

Our Uncle Sam - The Horse the Sale Ring Nearly Missed

There is something uncomfortable about the way we measure potential at the yearling sale ring. We like it to announce itself, we look for the polished coat, the correct conformation, the fashionable pedigree and the kind of presence that turns our heads. We want promise to be obvious, but sometimes it walks quietly into an empty sale ring, late in the day, when much of the crowd has already drifted on.

Our Uncle Sam was offered at the 2015 Bathurst Gold Crown Yearling Sale, he was a plain brown colt by Sportswriter from the Village Jasper mare Rooftop Fairy, bred in Victoria by Neville Ismail, of Ashdon Valley Racing. Chris Frisby had already bought a couple of yearlings and was not particularly searching for another. But as luck would have it that day, he looked across at the colt and offered \$3,500. The auctioneer announced that the colt had been passed in, but a few minutes later, Chris was approached and told the vendor would accept the offer. And the plain colt nobody seemed to want was making Bathurst home.

The young horse was gelded early and became known as Sam around the Frisby stable. Nothing about the beginning of Sam's story suggested that he would one day become one of the Western District's most recognisable pacers. There was no enormous purchase price to create expectation, no bidding war, no guarantee that the plain colt would become anything more than an honest racehorse.

“**Potential rarely arrives fully formed**

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(Image credit: harness.org)

Our Uncle Sam continued...



An emotional moment shared between trainer and driver, father and son. Chris and Anthony Frisby (Image credit: Ashlea Brennan Photography)

But he had a place to grow, and he had Chris and Judy Frisby, with Peter Delaney sharing in the ownership, and Anthony Frisby eventually becoming his regular driver. A local stable, familiar hands and the time to grow out and become the horse he was capable of being. That may be the less glamorous part of racing, but perhaps it is the most important, a yearling can be bought in a few minutes, a racehorse is developed over years.

Sam showed ability early winning three races at two and another six as a three-year-old, but he was not yet the finished horse. After returning as a four-year-old, he won four races in succession before being tested against stronger company. He ran second in the Paleface Adios Stakes but was unable to make an impression in the Chariots of Fire.

There is a big temptation in racing—and probably in life—to keep pressing forward when something is almost working. To try harder, race again, ask for more, but Chris Frisby chose another way, Sam was given time and went to the paddock.

On his next return three Bathurst trials helped prepare him for a Queensland campaign where he won three of seven starts before being spelled once more, his best racing was still ahead of him.

The races he did not win-

We usually construct racing stories around victories, the trophy, the photograph, the moment the number goes into the frame, yet Our Uncle Sam may be remembered most fondly for some of the races he did not win.

In the 2018 Inter Dominion grand final at Melton, he started as one of the outsiders. He met Tiger Tara at the height of his powers and finished second, rating an extraordinary 1:53.9 over 2760 metres. He had not won, but he had arrived, the inexpensive Bathurst yearling was no longer simply a good country horse, he had stood against the best pacers in Australasia and proved he belonged among them.

A few months later, Sam again chased Tiger Tara home in the 2019 A.G. Hunter Cup. Then, in the 2020 Hunter Cup, he came within a half-head of defeating King Of Swing.

Another second, another race that could be read as a defeat if we looked only at the result, but horses do not always need to win to show us what they are made of. Sam kept turning up against champions, he kept trying, he kept making them earn it.

“

The Group 1 moment

His first Group 1 victory came at Menangle in March 2019 in the Bohemia Crystal Free For All, he was driven with patience, and Sam fought through the straight to hold out the late challenge of Ellmers Image. Four years after walking through the Bathurst sale ring without attracting another bid, the unwanted colt was a Group 1 winner.

He returned the following year and won the corresponding Miracle Mile—night staying feature again, proving the first victory was not an accident, nor was it the end of the story. Sam had taken the Frisby family to tracks and races they had once only imagined attending and carried the name of the Bathurst stable into the biggest contests in Australasian harness racing. He had also earned many times more than his purchase price.

But reducing the story to a financial return misses its real value, the money tells us he was successful, the family's memories tell us what he meant.



Our Uncle Sam winning the group 1 Platinum Projex Free For All (Image credit: Ashlea Brennan Photography)

BEYOND THE CROWN

Our Uncle Sam continued... Coming home

For Bathurst participants, some victories carry a meaning that cannot be captured by prize money alone. Sam's win in the Shirley Turnbull Memorial was one of those victories. Chris Frisby later explained that Bathurst horse people aspire to win the Shirley Turnbull in much the same way that juvenile connections dream of winning the Gold Crown.

For Our Uncle Sam, it completed a quiet circle, the Victorian bred colt had been found at the Bathurst sale, developed by a local family, travelled the Grand Circuit and stood beside champions, then he came home and won one of Bathurst's most cherished races. Perhaps homecomings matter because they allow the people who knew the beginning to see what the journey became, they know how much work existed between Lot 202 and the Grand Circuit horse.

More than the numbers

Our Uncle Sam retired during the 2022 Bathurst Gold Crown Carnival.

His final record stood at 121 starts for 24 wins, 27 placings and \$715,609 in prizemoney, these are impressive numbers. But numbers flatten a life if we let them, they do not show the early mornings, the paddock spells or the decisions not to race. They do not show Anthony sitting behind him as the field turned for home in an Inter Dominion Final, or the family travelling, together, meeting people across the

industry and returning to Bathurst with another story to tell. And they do not show what it means when a trainer calls a horse "once in a lifetime." After racing, Sam remained with the family, Judy prepared him for a successful career in the show ring, it is difficult to imagine a more appropriate retirement. The horse the sale ring nearly missed had found the place where he belonged.

What we almost overlook

Racing depends upon judgement. We assess breeding, structure, performance, speed and potential. We study catalogues and pedigrees and try to predict a future that has not even begun. Sometimes we are right, the horse with all the obvious promise becomes exactly what everyone expected. And sometimes a plain brown colt walks into the ring not creating a stir, or commanding a great price, he simply waits for someone to look twice.

Our Uncle Sam's story is not proof that every inexpensive yearling will become a champion, horse racing has never offered those kinds of guarantees, it offers something quieter, a reminder that value and appearance are not always the same thing, that development and patience matters. That the races we nearly win can reveal as much as the ones we do. And that occasionally, the horse nobody was looking for becomes the horse a family—and a community—will never forget.

BATHURST GOLD CROWN FUTURITY PAYMENTS



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3YO FINAL PAYMENT -
FEB 27

GC41 SERIES

YEARLING / GC 4 LIFE
PAYMENT - AUG 26

2YO SUSTAINING / SERIES
PAYMENT - NOV 26

2YO FINAL PAYMENT -
FEB 27

GC42 SERIES

FOAL PAYMENT - AUG 26

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- AUG 27

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