



## MEDIA RELEASE

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# Proven Champion

By Mick Floyd Sandown Racing & Media Manager

Proven Impala again proved herself one of Australia's finest middle distance chasers when she scored a last gasp victory in tonight's Group 2 McKenna Memorial at Sandown Park.

Sent to the boxes a \$3.30 favourite, Proven Impala began well from box 5 and was joined by defending champion Irma Bale (\$4) and as the chasing pack bunched up the favoured pair cleared away.

Irma Bale assumed the lead past the post the first time but Proven Impala tracked her the entire way, never more than two lengths away, to set up a thrilling dash to the line. Turning for home, Proven Impala switched to the rails for one last surge and in the final stride claimed the \$40,000 first prize. Irma Bale was gallant in her defence of her McKenna Memorial title, going down by a nose in 34.36, while Surf Mail overcame a torrid race to finish an eye catching third.



**Proven Impala nails Irma Bale on the post to win the McKenna Memorial**

"When she got away cleanly I thought beauty, but then I saw Irma Bale on the outside of us. I knew Irma had better mid race speed than us but when she (Proven Impala) switched back to the rail I thought we were a big chance," said trainer Joe Borg following the run.

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## AUSTRALIAN GREYHOUND RACING ASSOCIATION

Inundated by well wishes on returning to the kennel block, an elated Borg was quick to acknowledge his support team back home for the work they'd put in.

"I'm over the moon! My parents will be over the moon. They would have loved to have been here tonight but there's a lot of dogs at home and they're looking after them. This win is as much for them for all of the work they've done and the help they've given me."

It's been a remarkable rise for a greyhound that had won just two of her first 12 race starts – one of which at Tier 3 level – and didn't make her first Group final until her 49th career start. Now with 70 starts under her belt, Proven Impala is the only greyhound to have won over all three distances at both city tracks, has competed in eight Group finals – winning two – and 27 races in total. Her career prize money stands at \$266,400. Not that prize money is the motivating factor for Borg.

"This money doesn't really mean anything to me, it's about the thrill of the win and competing in this class. There were some outstanding greyhounds in that race tonight and some of the country's best trainers were there – it was a star studded line up – and to beat them with this dog is a real thrill."

Nor is his champion showing any signs of slowing down.

"Even though she's over three and a half she's racing as well as she was when she was two. Her next venture will be the AWM Distance Championship (725m) at The Meadows on Maturity night."

**PAW NOTE:** The 2013 McKenna Memorial may have been Irma Bale's final career start. The 2012 Sandown Greyhound of the Year is the only chaser to have won a feature race over all three distances at Sandown, winning two RSN Sandown Cups, winning the 2012 McKenna Memorial and finishing a runner up in 2013, winning a TAB Melbourne Cup Prelude and reaching the 2011 Macro Meats Laurels. Her overall record at Sandown Park (all distances) stands at 19 starts for 9-0-2. The Sandown Greyhound Racing Club acknowledges Paul Wheeler and Graeme Bate for the fantastic job they've done with the Daughter of Bartrim Bale and Amelia Bale, and look forward to seeing her progeny compete at Sandown Park in the future.



**Proven Impala with trainer Joe Borg and owner Larissa Darragh (All Pics Paul Munt)**

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After the placed runners the field finished in the following order 4<sup>th</sup> New Tibur (\$14.70), 5<sup>th</sup> Major League (\$8.50), 6<sup>th</sup> Zelemar Fever (\$14.00) 7<sup>th</sup> Boris Fields (\$10.50) and 8<sup>th</sup> Cintiarna (\$8.70).

Proven Impala is raced by Larissa Darragh and is trained by Joe Borg she is a Black bitch whelped October 2009 by Velocette from Thanks Blue (Go Wild Teddy x Queen Mint). Proven Impala has won 27 of her 70 starts and has been placed on 18 occasions and with the \$40,000 first prize for the McKenna it took her current stake earnings to \$266,400.

The McKenna Memorial was first run in 1971 and acknowledges the contribution to the Sandown Club by legendary administrator Jack McKenna. McKenna came to Sandown and took the job of Club secretary in the 1940's from Tatura in central Victoria. He had held the position of secretary of the Tatura Plumpton Coursing Club and he made a major impact after arriving in the city. He was instrumental in the club's advancement in many ways but importantly its move across the railway line and the purchase of the land of the current site. McKenna's ability as an administrator is still to this day talked about in reverent terms and the sport and particularly Sandown will always be in his debt. The honour roll listed below of past winners is a classy one it starts with National Distance Champ Saki Dasher trained by Aussie Rules superstar Bob Pratt and finishes with this year's winner Strong Intention plus last year's winner Flash of Light both who won over the 595. When the race was conducted over the 700 the list contains some of the best stayers of all time.

1971 **Saki Dasher**, 1972 **Binica**, 1973 **Lizrene**, 1974 **Audiro**, 1975 **La Sierra**, 1976 **Bolta's Gift**, 1977 **Miss O'Dare**, 1978 **Irish Temptress**, 1979 **Precious Charm**, 1980 **Tarmoor Eagle**, 1981 **Leader's Jester**, 1982 **Supplier**, 1983 **Quick Pulse**, 1984 **Sheila's Teresa**, 1985 **Doris Lee**, 1986 **Plunderer**, 1987 **High Intensity**, 1988 **Lady Paragon**, 1989 **Rules**, 1990 **National Honour**, 1991 **Pleasure**, 1992 **Pace Galore**, 1993 **Havadip**, 1994 **Minyama**, 1995 **Keon Star**, 1996 **Wiljaver**, 1997 **Sam's Idol**, 1998 **Totally Ablaze**, 1999 **Kobble Creek**, 2000 **Osti's Joker**, 2001 **Pearl Larricki**, 2002 **Boomeroo**, 2003 **Arvo's Junior**, 2004 **Arvo's Athena**, 2005 **Malfoy**, 2006 **Token Arrow**, 2007 **Miss Grub**, 2008 **Fallen Zorro**, 2009 **Mantra Lad**, 2010 **Flash Of Light**, 2011 **Strong Intention** and 2012 **Irma Bale**.

**Thanks to Mick Floyd Sandown Racing & Media Manager for story content.**



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