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Fanta Bale's the Champ, with first Group One wins for Maja Mahi Mahi and Black Mumbo

By Mick Floyd SGRC & Kathrine Ernst Australian Racing Greyhound

Fanta Bale (\$4.60) has laid claim to being one of the sport's greatest ever chasers by registering a breathtaking victory in the \$250,000 RSN Sandown Cup at Sandown Park on Thursday night.



Fanta Bale winning the Sandown Cup (All Pics Clint Anderson)

The big crowd trackside was buzzing as one of the best fields assembled for the great race headed to the boxes, and the race delivered everything greyhound racing fans hoped it would.

Western Australian chaser Teddy Monelli led early before Dundee Osprey (\$12.20) swept around the field to take a commanding lead. Fanta Bale was denied a gap between runners and shuffled back to midfield, while the odds on favourite Burn One Down (\$2.10) settled in a prominent position on the rail.

Fanta Bale and Midnight Elsa made their moves down the back straight but with 150m to go, Fanta Bale still spotted the lamp lighter a four-length margin. But the tenacious little chaser railed brilliantly running for home to surge past the gallant Dundee Osprey and score by half a length in 41.87.

The win came as a surprise to trainer Robert Britton who believed Fanta Bale would have to find the lead early to win the world's richest race for stayers.

"We keep looking for reasons why she can't win, but she keeps finding a way to prove us wrong," said Britton following the win.

"When Midnight Elsa headed her I thought we were on for place prize money only, but that's what she does, she'll put her head out and keep trying.

"I've had a lot of real good dogs over a lot of years, but I haven't had what I'd call out an out champion. You've really got to put her in that league now."

Fanta Bale became the first greyhound to win at group 1 level over all three metropolitan distances having previously won the Australian Cup, the Rookie Rebel and Hume Cup at the Meadows. It was the fourth group 1 win of her career and the \$175,000 winner's cheque took her career prize money to \$716,885, passing the great Miata into fifth place all time. Fanta Bale doesn't turn three until August making her achievements to date all the more remarkable.

"She's been a wonderful dog right from the start. The first time we trialled her here, straight from the pre-trainer, she ran 29.50 odd. Then two weeks later she won her maiden in 29.36. Those sorts of dogs don't come along very often.

"She's just a perfect dog I guess. We'd like to think she's still got a career ahead of her, but whatever she does from here is a bonus because she's done more than we ever expected."

The Sandown Cup is a race that has long eluded the Lara-based mentor despite having a number of top chances in past years. To finally break through with a dog like Fanta Bale was particularly satisfying especially with so many friends and family involved.

"To have friends involved as well is a buzz. It's been fun all the way through. "The Sandown Cup was the headline event of the club's first group 1 triple bill.

Earlier in the night, Anthony Karabitsakos broke through for his first group 1 victory when Black Mumbo (\$6.60) upstaged the odds-favourite Bwilderling.

The black dog began well from box eight but was turned sideways around the first turn as Queenslander Bubble Guppy (box two) shot through to take the lead.

Down the back, young gun Jimmy Newob (\$4.80) (box seven) circled Bubble Guppy (\$17.70) to take the lead, with Black Mumbo quickly gathering his momentum to push up into second spot.

Approaching the home turn, it was a race in two as Jimmy Newob and Black Mumbo went stride for stride, with the latter gaining the upper hand in the closing stages and kicking clear to triumph in 29.53.

It was Black Mumbo's fourth appearance at group level, having finished second in the Group 3 Bill Collins Speed Star and qualifying for both the Group 3 Silver Bullet and the Group 2 Ballarat Cup.

"It's about time," trainer Anthony Karabitsakos quipped.

"I was just hoping he would be able to cross – and he did everything right – [it's] out of this world."

A son of Stagger and My Path Princess, Black Mumbo has now won 15 of his 42 race starts, with prize money earnings now in excess of \$172,000.



Black Mumbo winning the Harrison-Dawson

Two races later, Maja Mahi Mahi gave 26-year-old Ashlee Terry the biggest thrill in her training career when taking out the \$145,000 Sapphire Crown.



Maja Mahi Mahi winning the Sapphire Crown

Maja Mahi Mahi (\$7.70) upstaged one of the best fields to ever contest the Group 1 Sapphire Crown (515m) with a tenacious victory.

The black bitch was quickly into stride from box two and was able to punch up and hold the lead on the inside of dual group 1 winner Striker Light (\$3.00) in the charge around the first turn.

Down the back, the bonny bitch was once again challenged – this time by group 2 Laurels heroine Up Hill Jill (\$4.20) (box five). However, coming off the back Maja Mahi Mahi slipped into top gear and despite rolling wide in the home straight, she was too strong for Up Hill Jill when scoring by half a length in 29.67.

Terry, who is based at Cranbourne South, was speechless after the win – her first at group level.

“We didn’t really expect it but I was hoping that if she got out in front...I don’t really know what to say,” Terry said.

“She wasn’t quite ready [for the series] we didn’t think so it shows she is pretty tough.

“I don’t know what else could top this...I am very excited.”

Maja Mahi Mahi, a daughter of Spring Gun and April’s Legacy, has now won 13 of her 40 starts with her prize money earnings now in excess of \$143,000.

After the placings in the Cup the field finished in the following order 4th Midnight Elsa (\$7.10), 5th Dundee Calypso (\$10.80), 6th Trip To Eden (\$12.10) 7th Teddy Monelli (\$11.70) and Brolly Bale (\$60.40).

Fanta Bale is a Black bitch whelped August 2014 by David Bale from Ucmé Typhoon (Dodgem By Design x USS Mysterious). Fanta Bale is raced Paul Wheeler and trained by Robert Britton. She has raced 37 times for 23 wins and nine placings. After adding the \$175,000 first prize for the Sandown Cup her stake earnings stand at \$716,885. Sixth on the all-time stakes winning list.

Listed below is the honour roll for the Sandown Cup the race has been won by many of the champion stayers of the past including AGRA Hall Of Famers Lizrene and Bold Trease. Plus the great stayers of their particular era Fawn Scout, Paul’s Thunder, Corcoran, Raurimu, Boronia Blossom, Tonight’s Wish, Osti’s Joker, Bentley Babe, Arvo’s Junior, Best Quoted, Sargent Major, Mantra Lad, Bobby Boucheau, Irma Bale and Sweet It Is.

1957 Orialta, **1959** Woodford Chief, **1961** Plunkett’s Present, **1963** Briar View, **1964** Haleka Jewel, **1965** Venetian Court **1966** Fawn Scout **1967** Charlie Lee **1968** Sprite of Egypt **1969** Local Blend, **1970** Paul’s Thunder, **1971** Paul’s Thunder, **1972** Lizrene, **1973** Lizrene, **1974** Corcoran **1975** Tammy Shanta, **1976** Brindle Norma, **1977** Rani’s Copy, **1978** Kawati Boy, **1979** Miss Tema, **1980** Wynlee Wonder, **1981** Bianca Lee, **1982** Status Supreme, **1983** Lead Role, **1984** Raurimu, **1985** Tashla, **1986** Bold Trease, **1987** Bold Trease, **1988** Bold Trease, **1989** Bold Trease, **1990** Western Creole, **1991** Pixie Eyes, **1992** Village Stomper, **1993** Eliza Dylan, **1994** Top Sovereign, **1995** Keon Star, **1996** Boronia Blossom, **1997** Tonight’s Wish, **1998** Red Mystique, **1999** Smart Attitude, **2000** Osti’s Joker, **2001** Bentley Babe, **2002** Jennev, **2003** Arvo’s Junior, **2004** Proven Lethal, **2005** Best Quoted, **2006** Sargent Major, **2007** “No Race” **2008** Chinatown Lad, **2009** Mantra Lad, **2010** Next Top Model, **2011** Bobby Boucheau, **2012** Irma Bale, **2013** Irma Bale, **2014** Sweet It Is and **2015** Sweet It Is, and 2016 **Bells Are Ringin.**

After the placings in the Sapphire Crown the field finished in the following order 4th Pepper Fire (\$7.90), 5th Flyrite (\$5.60), 6th Princess Pout (\$11.90) 7th Dash Of Rose (\$19.20) and Call Me Gee (\$23.20).

Maja Mahi Mahi is raced Middle Tote Syndicate she is trained by Ashley Terry at Cranbourne South in Victoria, she is a Black bitch whelped October 2013 by Spring Gun from April’s Legacy (El Galo x Heart’s War). Maja Mahi Mahi has won 12 and been placed 12 times from her 39 starts and with the \$100,000 first prize for the Sapphire Crown it took her current stake earnings to \$143,990.

The Sapphire Classic was first run in 1974 as an age restricted race for dogs and bitches. The event was relaunched in 2002 as the Sapphire Crown Classic a feature for bitches only. Listed below is the impressive list of past winners.

Group 1 Sapphire Crown Classic Honour Roll

Year	Winner	Trainer	Time	Year	Winner	Trainer	Time
1974	Bristol Sue	Alec Reid	31.11	1995	Ben's Surprise	Len Ketelaar	30.34
1975	Dynamic Dean	Paul Hogan	30.67	1996	Sarah's Deano	Marion Siakew	30.30
1976	Tawny Brad	Greg Durham	30.82	1997	Token Prince	Michael Abbott	30.31
1977	Overflow Love	Pat Haas	31.09	1998	Time Framer	Philip Newman	30.12
1978	Rubin Caine	Ted Sallows	30.77	1999	Ashlee Jeannine	Peter Giles	29.74
1979	Monica's Mist	John Hellingman	30.74	2000	Dutchy's Angel	Tom Dailly	29.74
1980	Worthy Weston	Brian Jacobson	30.93	2001	Let It Be	Neil Dicks	29.75
1981	Shamrock Flight	Kevin McCabe	31.06	2002	Bye For Now	Ian Dann	30.00
1982	Wynlee Spirit	Alan Roberts	31.17	2003	Bogie Leigh	Tony Brett	30.07
1983	Rocky Pyramid	Fred Ladd	30.65	2004	Paua To Burn	Steven White	29.85
1984	Currency Lass	Ned Bryant	31.10	2005	Paua To Burn	Steven White	29.82
1985	Rembrandt	John Hose	31.06	2006	Betty's Angel	Paul Bartolo	29.85
1986	Sydney Dingaan	Ned Bryant	30.83	2007	Que Sera Sera	Angela Langton	29.91
1987	Rothwell	Keith Anderson	30.63	2008	Queen Lauryn	Tony Brett	29.79
1988	Hogan	Len Ketelaar	31.02	2009	Cindeen Shelby	Kelvyn Greenough	29.72
1989	Super Gun	Eddie Baumgartner	30.81	2010	Not Run		
1989*	Dapto Brandi	Darren Murray	30.77	2011	Amakler Girl	Robert Stack	29.70
1990	Ravello	Robert Britton	30.82	2012	Peggy May	Jason Thompson	29.42
1991	Heza Mullrook	Keith Kent	30.42	2013	Xylia Allen	Graeme Bate	29.48
1992	Dashing Eagle	Bob Douglas	30.31	2014	Oakvale Destiny	Jeff Britton	29.92
1993	Magnacarter	Bill McNally	30.60	2015	Lamia Bale	Steven Collins	29.23
1994	Stylish Raider	Kevin Byng	30.33	2016	Narralee	Steve Creighton	29.47

* *Run as the Sandown Auction Classic, July 1989*

After the first three placings in the Harrison-Dawson the field finished in the following order, 4th Igor Karkaroff (\$52.60), 5th Bewildering (\$1.70), 6th Invictus Rapid (\$21.80) 7th Unlawful Entry (\$19.10) and Bruce Tycoon (\$16.40).

Black Mumbo is raced and trained by Anthony Karabitsakos he is a Black dog whelped November 2013 by Stagger from My Path Princess (Path To Power x Octare). Black Mumbo has won 15 of his 42 starts and has been placed on 15 occasions after the first prize of \$100,000 for the Harrison-Dawson took his current stake earnings stand at \$172,380.

Past winners the race after it was run for the first time in 2009 as the Dawson was won by **Dyna Forte**, 2010 **Flash Of Light**, 2011 **Don Chendo**, 2012 **General Destini**, 2013 **Clone Your Own**, 2014 **Awesome Project** and 2015 **Dundee Osprey**.

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