



MEDIA RELEASE
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Irma Upstages Champ - Again!

Irma Bale defended her RSN Sandown Cup tonight when she held off the fast finishing Bell Haven and the gallant Miata in one of the most exciting finishes in the race's rich history.

In front of the biggest RSN Sandown Cup crowd in recent history, retiring champion Miata was sent to the boxes a \$2.70 favourite – just the second time in her 51 start career that she started 'in the black' – however it was Irma Bale (backed from \$5.50 to \$3.80 on TAB) who flew the boxes to take a commanding lead passing the post the first time.



Irma Bale hangs on to win the RSN Sandown Cup

Irma Bale turned off the back straight with a three length lead as Destini Fireball set off in pursuit. Miata had recovered from a poor start to begin her run along the rail, while Tasmanian star Bell Haven switched to outside to make her run.

In a frantic run to the line, Irma Bale did enough to hold off Bell Haven by half a head, with Miata just a further head away in third in 42.10. Just 2.75 lengths separated the first seven runners over the line.

AUSTRALIAN GREYHOUND RACING ASSOCIATION

“It was a super run, she’s a special greyhound,” said victorious trainer Graeme Bate.

“She just gives her all every start. To hold off a field like that was just a courageous effort.”

The victory saw Irma Bale become the fourth greyhound to win successive RSN Sandown Cups after Paul’s Thunder (1970-71), Lizrene (1972-73) and Bold Trease (1986-89). It was her fourth Group race victory from 16 finals and 35th victory over all. The \$125,000 winner’s cheque took her prize money to \$541,801 and into fifth place in the all-time Australian prize money list.

Much of the pre-race build up had focused on the greatest greyhound of her era, Miata. In what would be her final race track appearance, she displayed all the class and courage that has endeared her to racing fans throughout the country.

The crowd rose as one when she began to make ground in the final section of the race, and even trainer Paul Stuart admits to getting caught up in the moment.

“To be honest it’s the first time I started cheering for her from behind the boxes,” said trainer Paul Stuart.

“Going past the 595 boxes I saw her slowly grinding away and I thought she might just reel them in. But Irma Bale was too good – it’s no disgrace finishing third behind her.”



Master trainer Graeme Bate, handler Joe Briffa with Irma Bale, Eddie McGuire and owner Paul Wheeler with the Cup. (All Pics Clint Anderson)

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Stuart was full of praise for his champion greyhound, and felt it was the right time to retire the five-time Group 1 winner.

“She has nothing else to prove. It’s great to see her bow out on such a great effort.”

Miata retires with a record that may never be matched. From 51 career starts, she finished with 42 wins and was placed on six occasions. Her \$715,508 in prize money is an Australian record.

The night was a tremendous success for the club, with more than \$10,000 given away by Eddie McGuire and Jaimee Rogers in “The Dog, The Money or the Box,” and the on-course Punter’s Club returning an impressive 472% return. In addition, every person who came to see Miata off in her farewell race will become an owner in her first pup to race, courtesy of Paul Stuart, the Wheeler family and the Sandown Greyhound Racing Club.

The RSN Sandown Cup was the culmination of Sandown’s tremendously successful Autumn Carnival which shattered a number of records in a memorable month of greyhound racing.

After the placings the field finished in the following order 4th Proven Impala (\$5.10), 5th Destini Fireball (\$7.60), 6th Steve Allen (\$20.20) 7th Maddison Dee (\$35.40) and Reckless Charm (\$51.00).

Irma Bale is Black bitch whelped October '09 he is by Bartrim Bale from Amelia Bale (Sonic Flight x Evonne Bale). She is raced by Paul Wheeler and trained by veteran Victorian Hall of Fame trainer Graeme Bate, her race record stands at 83 starts for 35 wins and 30 placings and prizemoney earnings of \$541,801.

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 and Bobby Boucheau.

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 **and 2012** Irma Bale.

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