

# AGRA HALL OF FAME

## Jim Coleman (Inducted 2008)

Years involved in industry: 60

Category: TRAINER

### NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Won Sydney Trainers Premiership 1976
- Won five Group 1 National Derby's 1972, 1980, 1981, 1984, 1995
- Won two Group 1 Australian Cups 1975, 1976.
- Won Group 1 1985 Melbourne Cup 1986.

Australia can boast many fine trainers from different parts of the nation but few are acknowledged as icons in the sport.

Top New South Wales mentor Jim Coleman is one such person who is bestowed with that honor.



Formerly from Queensland and together with his wife Christine they have successfully combined to snare almost every major race on the Australian calendar, some of them several times.

Coleman's lay back laconic attitude to the sport has endeared him to most and his friendly cooperative nature places him high in the sport for more reasons than his ability to churn out a seemingly endless array of top-class chasers.

It all started back in Coleman's hometown of Toowoomba, although born in Murwillumbah he spent nearly all of his early life on the Darling Downs.

Coleman's parents managed stations and properties and his early schooling was done out in the bush before the family settled in Toowoomba and he went to Christine Brothers College.

One constant memory of his childhood was greyhounds. His father Steve was a very accomplished trainer in and around Toowoomba, while his Uncle Tom was highly regarded in the Northern Rivers area.

Coleman couldn't remember not having a greyhound around the place, "I had a greyhound as well as a cattle dog from the time I was four or five, I've even got an old photo of me being bathed as a baby and there are greyhounds in a paddock in the background." Coleman said.

Coleman left school at age 13 and became an apprentice jockey to Danny Baxter in Toowoomba.

He only lasted about a year before he became too big and then entered the meat works becoming a butcher and working in the meat trade for the next eight years.

During this time he trained greyhounds with his father learning the art as he went along obviously from an extremely good teacher.

During his teens and early 20's he also pursued his other sporting love of boxing. As an amateur he was a Queensland Golden Gloves champion and when he turned professional he held a few titles during his 47 pro fights.

Coleman later trained a couple of young fighters in Sid Capple and Rocco Spanso who both won many fights and performed well.

Coleman branched out on his own as a greyhound trainer in his early 20's and fondly remembers his first winner. It was Gail's Best at Lismore and she broke the track record. "That was about 66-67 it was a big thrill but the record was broken three weeks later by a dog called Silent Ring who went to Sydney and won a classic." Coleman said.

Coleman left the meat trade and bought a taxi in Toowoomba. The cab went well and he expanded the business to three taxis.

After driving a cab for some time Coleman decided on a working holiday in New Zealand. He worked at many different jobs as a machinist, a truck driver, and worked on some studs properties. Coleman also had some pro fights on both the North and South Islands.

After enjoying two years in the land of the long white cloud, Coleman became home sick and made his return to Toowoomba.

He decided to give greyhound racing a real go and spent three-month periods at Tamworth and Musswellbrook training many winners.

In 1970 the Colemans made the move to Sydney, it was a big decision to make and they set up kennels at Chipping Norton west of Sydney.

They were there for 15 months and had almost immediate success with greyhounds like He's Some Boy and a dog named Young Moss.

Coleman makes no secret of the fact that his biggest thrill in the sport was his first city success in Sydney with Young Moss.

It was in the 1972 National Derby that Young Moss started the Coleman's on the road to fame and fortune. Jumping brilliantly from box one Young Moss an 8/1 chance lead all the way to hold off Woolley Wilson and Mighty Close.

It was the first of five National Derby wins for the Colemans.

It's the major race that has provided them with their most success.

During in 1972 the Coleman's bought 20 acres of bushland at Londonderry and built from scratch their property Blue Hills Stud.

It's served as the ideal property to bred, rear and race and it catered for their greyhound needs, but was very much a farm, where many different animals resided.

Greyhound training was very much a partnership for the Coleman's and both have won the Sydney trainers premiership as individuals.

"It couldn't have worked any other way if I was away Christine would look after the dogs at home and vice versa. Christine learnt very quickly considering she had not seen a greyhound before we got married. We've done it all together and enjoyed it very much over the years." Coleman said.



I asked what were his favorite tracks and how he rated his best dogs?

"My favorite was Harold Park it was a great track. I use to like Olympic Park as well. We had a lot of success there, but it's gone too. I suppose any track you can train a winner on is a good track." Coleman said.

"General Jeff would be the best he won a Derby and a Perth Cup, broke records and only had 24 starts, he won his last 11

straight. He was by our other two champion dogs Ungwilla Lad from Odious so he was bred to be as good as he was."

"Legendary Kid was a top dog, Handicap as well he won 11 from 13 including the Derby. Young Moss and Dallas Duo were both smart yes, we've been very lucky." Coleman said.

After all the Australia wide success one race that continually eluded the Coleman's was one he dearly tried to win the Galaxy at Tweed Heads.

"We're tried hard enough and we certainly gave it a go, we've had five or six favorites made the final a dozen times and broken the track record. So you can't say we didn't gnawing away at it.

Jim Coleman's major race wins consisted of five National Derbies Young Moss 1972, General Jeff 1980, Handicap 1981, Inch Time 1984 and Dallas Man 1995. Two Australian Cups Ungwilla Lad 1975 and Odious 1976 plus a Melbourne Cup with Legendary Kid 1986.

Coleman retired from training in 2000 but as a favour for friend Terry Hill, he looked after National Sprint Champion Placard for a two-week period in Tasmania prior to the sprint final. With the combination of the Coleman's polish and known how together with regular trainers Ray and Ruth King Placard made a one act affair of the Group 1 final the last to be held at the old Launceston Track.

These days the Coleman's spent most of the time at Kirri Beach in Queensland and love it. Jim acknowledges that the games has been very good to them and still enjoys greyhound racing and the people he has met through the sport.