

BROTHER FOX "ONE OF A KIND"

During the early to mid-80's was one of the most exciting periods of greyhound racing in Australia. It produced many champions, without doubt the greyhound that thrilled crowds the most was Brother Fox. In a short spectacular career he displayed ability and pace not seen before on greyhound tracks around the country. Purchased by Dubbo trainer Steve Kavanagh for \$500 as a pup he proved a bargain basement buy, not only as a race dog but also as one of Australia's leading stud dogs in the late 80's early 90's. "The Fox" had a turn of speed that left most talented opposition trailing in his wake and more importantly he was able to pass on that rare ability to many champion sons and daughters. Here's the story behind the greyhound described as "a freak" Brother Fox.

THE BREEDING AND THE LITTER

Brother Fox was bred by Noel Hiscox of Armidale in New South Wales. His sire was former Harold Park specialist Little Blade from Pitstock Park. It was Pitstock Park's second mating. Her first litter to New South Wales sire Wild Port produced the brilliant Acacia Park and Mister Biggles. I asked Steve Kavanagh how he purchased the champion brindle pup. "I formed a syndicate of mates and we bought four or five pups at the same time. I had some prior knowledge of how good the first litter was before they had raced. Ron Brown was a mate of mine trained them at the time. He actually picked out the pups for us but he didn't pick them for any reason just at random pure luck I guess."

The rest of the litter raced as Acacia's Dream, Amtrak, Doubtful Bill, Iron Cross, Our Park, Winrey and the only bitch in the litter Penbrook Park. There was quite a bit of depth in the litter with Amtrak, Our Park and Pembrook Park were all well above average. But like most greyhound superstars there brothers and sisters never match the star of the litter.



Brother Fox on the dais after winning the Potential Stake at Wentworth Park

THE REARING

At six weeks old the pups arrived at Kavanagh's 25 acre Dubbo farm to be reared with other pups of a similar age. I questioned Kavanagh as to what the young Brother Fox was like and how he reared his pups at Dubbo. "I reared in about 10 x 12 yards in those days the pups would get heaps of free galloping every day in large galloping paddocks about 60 x 30. He was always a nice pup very docile never overly aggressive it was a lovely mix going to Little Blade.

Brother Fox had a magnificent temperament it was his trade mark. He was so relaxed one night at Harold Park I got called to the kennels. The officials thought someone had got to him as he was sound asleep in the race kennel on his back with four legs sticking straight up in the air. I had to prove he was O.K. I woke him up and he won brilliantly."

THE BREAKING IN

I quizzed Kavanagh as to how well the champ broke in. "I sent nine pups to be broken in by Bryce Ducking at Cudal. It's about 20 minutes from Orange. He was one of the youngest at 12 months while the others were about 14 months. He didn't do anything outstanding he was about the seventh fastest. He improved very rapidly I remember taking him down to Richmond and put him over the short course, he went better than Free For All dogs he was only a baby. He improved very quickly and only needed one look at a track before he would run the record next time there. As a pup he was so far forward he had his first start at 16 months, he was just going so well."



THE NAME

Brother Fox is quite an unusual name I asked Kavanagh how "The Fox" got his monicker. "One of the part owners Bob McCloughan use to say it all the time it was a bit of a saying at the time. Every time you met Bob he say "What's doing Brother Fox" that's how we named him. His kennel name was Jumbo."

THE OFFERS

As usually Brother Fox did have offers to buy him Steve Kavanagh explains. "We were offered \$25,000 after his maiden win at Grafton. If I had owned him one out I might have sold him but there was no way the syndicate was going to sell him.

Just prior to the Richmond Derby final we knocked back \$120,000 which was later raised to \$150,000 but it was probably for his stud potential at that stage. That big offer was made on T.V. it was pretty exciting at the time."

THE INJURIES

The champ raced very injury free for most of his short race career Kavanagh explains. "He was very injury free only popped an egg muscle once and even those injuries he suffered in his last start wasn't the reason he was retired. The demand for him at stud was just so great they were driving me mad it was an easy decision to make."

BEST PERFORMANCE AND BIGGEST THRILLS

I quizzed Kavanagh as to his opinion of Brother Fox's best performance. "I think his maiden win was a great effort winning by 15 lengths after coming out on his belly. His effort to win the Potential Stake was a great run winning in 30.65 at Wentworth Park on track that wasn't suppose too suit him. He was a wonderful dog to race the people loved him. I'll never forget night's like that solo promotion at Dubbo. They lined the fences that night. We spent a lot of time together he was a great "mate".



Brother Fox in action at Harold Park

AT STUD

Just like his racing career, Brother Fox was an instant hit when he went to stud. Steve Kavanagh had been fending off broodbitch owners for months, those who wanted to use the great dog while he was still racing.

When he went to stud, Brother Fox became a breed shaper. There are few, if any, pedigrees in Australia at least and also in England and Ireland, where he is not found multiple times.

Brother Fox's impact at stud has been one of significant importance to the Australian stud scene. His on-going sons and daughters will continue his famous name for many generations to come. Brother Fox commenced stud duties in 1985 at a first season record fee of \$1000. It was later to escalate to \$2000 such was his demand. The fee was an Australian record at the time. "The Fox" served 511 bitches was leading Sydney Sire in 1988 and 91. His major credit at stud was as sire of the litter of the century. The union to Alan Pringle's Promises Free is remembered so fittingly entitled "the litter of the century" and which contained other breed shapers like Amerigo Man, West Cape and Walkabout Sid the latter whose son Head Honcho became a world influence.

The other members of the litter were, Bogenfel, Carnival Boy, Jet Crusiser, and Half Nelson.

His great race dogs include such luminaries as Worth Doing who many believe to have been one of the greatest greyhounds this country has ever seen. His smashing of the Wentworth Park track record had to be seen to be believed.

Brother Fox's great son Gun Law Osti went on to sire Hall Of Famer Brett Lee.

His daughter China Trip is the only dual winner of the Australian Cup.

Daughters like Key Dancer, Golden Fox and Gravel Rash went on to produce their own breeding dynasties.

At one stage Brother Fox had a remarkable number of sons standing stud duty right around Australia.

His sons went on to sire champions, his daughters produced champions.

Here is a list of some other Brother Fox progeny that proved excellent race dogs and some absolute champions. Wary Suspect, Farmer George, Metal Springs, Brother Black, Daisy Clover, Clover Chief, Dancing Vixen, Shy Vixen, Paula Tana, Fox Hunt, Daiwa, Durante, McVella, Farmer

Wilson, Outward Bound, Shenandoah, Freddy's Dynasty, Sparkling Sprite, Lahtothini, Fabulous Fawn, Foxy Opera, Romany Gipsy, Pilgrims Star, Tender Fox, and Fabian. My apologies too any greyhound not on the above list that perhaps should be.

Many of the greatest greyhounds in Australia today commonly have three, four and even more crosses of the great Brother Fox found within their pedigrees.

Brother Fox changed the stud scene in this country forever. He heralded in an era of \$2000 service fees and opened the way for the greyhound breeding industry to become a truly professional business.

THE RACE CAREER

Brother Fox race career consisted of 23 starts for 15 wins three seconds and three thirds. "Jumbo" was unplaced at Singleton and Angle Park "The Fox's" prizemoney was \$40,000. His first start was in a maiden at Grafton over 402 metres. He came out of boxes last, but won by 15 lengths in 22.95 he started two's on.

Brother Fox's major wins started with the 1984 Vic Peters Classic at Harold Park. He won in World record time of 25.82 starting 5/2 favourite and won by five lengths. The race included Brave Gambler, The Silk and Autumn Lilly. Next was the Potential Stake in January 85 at Wentworth Park. Starting 9/10 on he won by 13 lengths in best of the night time a fast 30.65.

The champ then claimed the time honoured Hobart Thousand. After setting the track record at 28.21 and winning by 11 lengths in the semi-final. Running 28.31 in the final he won by six lengths at 7/2 on. The field included Busy Vintage, Samboy Gold and Bridport Silver.

Brother Fox's final major win was in the 85 Bi-Annual Classic starting 7/4 on he won by six lengths in B.O.N 26.07. The field included such stars as Beach Rhythm, Silver Tail Girl, Dominance and November Prince. Brother Fox won in the best of the night on Twelve occasions. The champ also was the subject of many club promotions performing record-breaking exhibition gallops at Richmond, Tweed Heads, Singleton and his home town track at Dubbo.

"Jumbo" raced for the last time at Harold Park on August 19, 1985. It was the only time he was beaten on his favourite track finishing second to Daisy Emm. Brother Fox had suffered a sprung toe and split webbing in the event, proving once again his undoubted courage and chasing ability. Brother Fox's retirement was more due to the constant demand by breeders than injuries suffered while racing.

The champion passed away peacefully in his sleep on July 18, 1993. The mark Brother Fox has left on the Australia scene is impossible to measure whether it was racing before packed houses that came just to see him run or the enormous on-going impact he has had on the stud scene all around the nation. Brother Fox will be remembered as a freak race dog that passed on those freakish qualities to a large number of his offspring.

****After quite a long wait Brother Fox was inducted into the AGRA Hall of Fame at the Langham Hotel in Melbourne on August 23th 2013. A very proud Steve Kavanagh accepted the award so richly deserved a true champion on and off the track.

The above story was produced in 1995 for the Greyhound Weekly it followed an interview I conducted with Steve Kavanagh. The section on Brother Fox at stud has been brought up to date with input from Queensland breeding expert David Brasch.

By Neil Brown