

# AGRA HALL OF FAME

## Highly Blessed

Black Bitch

(Chariot Supreme x I'm Blessed)

Whelped February 1998, Owner-Trainer: L.Ferrami, Year of Induction 2000

### NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS:

55 starts: 38 wins, 2 seconds, 3 thirds

Career Prizemoney \$294,565

Track record-holder Sandown 511m

Major Career Wins Included:

1990 Gold Collar 511m Olympic Park

1990 Shepparton Cup 440m Shepparton

1990 Melbourne Cup 511m Sandown

1990 XXXX Trophy Cup 558m Gabba

1991 Adelaide Cup 512m Angle Park

1991 Golden Easter Egg 520m Wentworth Park

1991 McRae Honda Trophy 511m Sandown

1991 Schweppes Cup 511m Sandown

In 1991, Highly Blessed was awarded All World Greyhound Field selection by the World Greyhound Racing Federation.



Sometimes you can be in the right place at the wrong time. Back on Sunday October the 1st 1989 I headed to Bendigo for the Qualifying trials of the Southern Cross Network Maiden Series. The series was very popular in those days and was the forerunner of the now very successful Vic Breeders conducted by each and every Victorian club.

The fastest qualifier that Sunday was a black bitch named Highly Blessed. I remember watching the trial and commenting "wow" that bitch is very smart. She recorded a quick 24.83, the benchmark at Bendigo at that time for maidens was around 25.40. We had a bit of luck and both my two greyhounds qualified, but you guessed it, in the first semi final a week later my dog Camona Black was run down by the 5/2 on favourite Highly Blessed in a time of 25.20. I was happy to have made the final while in a later semi his sister Camona Lady ran the fastest time of the night clocking 25.12. The final on October 16th saw Camona Lady drawn box one, Camona Black box two and the 6/4 on, favourite Highly Blessed in three.

In a thrilling race Camona Lady led till half way up the straight when Highly Blessed stormed past her to win easily in a best of the night 24.85. My other dog ran a handy fourth, can't be disappointed with that I thought second and fourth. She'll probably finish up a fair race dog that Highly Blessed, we all agreed on the three-hour trip home.

If most trainers are like me you tend to follow the careers of dogs that beat you in a maiden. Following the career of such a champion turned out to be quite a pleasure. After that Bendigo series I was lucky enough to become quite friendly with Doug Ferremi. The likeable knockabout from Shepparton had the perfect attitude and disposition to handle the baggage that comes with racing an outstanding champion as Highly Blessed turned out to be. As far as sprinters go there is no doubt in my mind she was the best bitch I've have ever seen. Third on my all time list behind Rapid Journey and Brett Lee.

In a race career that spanned 55 starts producing 38 wins. She retired on May 28,1992 Australia 's highest stake earner with \$294,565. At her peak between November 1990 and May 1991 she won six major finals. Highly Blessed was successful in the Melbourne Cup winning by seven lengths from box five, from Sandown she went to the Gabba winning the

XXXX Trophy over 558m on grass by 10 lengths, again from box five. Fronted up at Angle Park she won the Adelaide Cup by seven and half-lengths from box one. Then it was on to Sydney where she again beat the best at Wentworth Park in the Golden Easter Egg final from box four over 520 metres on grass, winning by five lengths. All four majors or group ones as they would be known today were won in the best time of the night.



The champ returned to Melbourne to win both the Honda Trophy and Schweppes Cup. She astounded a large crowd at Sandown two weeks in a row recorded seemingly impossible times. She ran 29.89 solo between races the first time and a week later 29.93 in the heat of the Honda. After attending Sandown weekly since the late 60's I never thought I'd see a greyhound run under 30 seconds at the old track. It was an opinion shared by Doug Ferremi, after the Honda heat win he remarked, " I think she's a freak".

Highly Blessed was afforded ever accolade a greyhound of her greatness was entitled. Among her many awards and victories "Josie" together with Sandi's Me Mum are the only two greyhounds outside North America to be selected by the WGF as one of the worlds best eight, for their performances in 1990.



I've often pondered what she might have done to a Top Gun field at her favourite track Sandown Park during her devastating rein in late 1990.

You can't do much more than turn up in the four major states of the country, win their feature events, three from horror draws, on different surfaces, over different distances. It was certainly a rare feat.

Ferremi's demeanour has remained the same as it did before, during and since he raced

Highly Blessed. A very modest and humble winner, gracious in defeat. He and Lorraine always felt special to have had the honour of breeding and racing such a champion. Perhaps it was always meant to be and was reflected so very well in her race name.

Along with greatness comes an enormous amount of media attention. Highly Blessed had more than her share and at the time was a great promotional tool for greyhound racing. She was featured on "A Current Affair", in the Womens Weekly and most daily papers around Australia .

As a brood bitch she produced a number of winners the best being Split The Bill runner-up in the 1998 Australian Cup and now standing at stud in Ireland.

Ferremi modestly declares that in his opinion she was the best of her era. There's no doubt the evidence above proves that statement to be correct.

Highly Blessed died on February 10th 1999, Doug and Lorraine Ferremi who bred and raced the champion. Had to make the tough decision to humanly put their pride and joy to sleep, due to a deteriorating health condition to cancer.



“She went down so quickly, I noticed she had gone off her tucker about the second week of January and a visit to the vet revealed a lump in her throat. She improved a little but it didn't last long and she became unsteady on her feet. We went back to the vet's and he informed us she would only get worst and suffer. Lorraine and I couldn't bear to see her in any pain and decided it was best to put her to sleep. Lorraine and I have always felt so lucky to have had the opportunity of racing one as good as she was. We brought her home and buried her in the garden and we had a plaque made to mark her grave.” Ferremi concluded.

Whelped February 1988 by Chariot Supreme from I'm Blessed, the little black flying machine was honoured with induction to the AGRA Hall Of Fame at the Meadows in Melbourne in September 2000. It was a fitting reward for one of this country's great champions and there were no prouder people present than Doug and Lorraine Ferremi. For this writer it was also very special, to have followed her as closely as I did, she will remain forever a personal favourite, a champion that will bring back fond memories for many years to come.

By Neil Brown.