

GCA HALL OF FAME

Ron Nestor

Category: Administration

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS:

Greyhound Racing Control Board of Victoria Member 22 years
National Coursing Association Treasurer 18 years

National Coursing Association President 7 years

Geelong GRC Committee Member 12 years

Judge of Coursing Waterloo Cup 27 years

In my days as a feature writer for the Greyhound Weekly in Victoria I wrote story about many great greyhound men and women. However, I am not sure if there has been a person that has had a more profound influence on me than the late Ron Nestor.

As a friend he was a champion bloke, as a mentor I always considered myself very lucky that we met, and I was able to spend so much time with him. He changed the way I thought and chose to live my life, I know it has been of great benefit to both myself and my family. The impression and guidance he offered me had been made to many and he is held in the highest esteem of anyone that has ever been involved in Greyhound Racing.

Ron was born on the 15th of February 1929 and we lost him on his way home from the MCG where he been working as a Commissionaire at the 2006 Commonwealth Games, he was 77.

Here is the article I wrote called **"A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS"**.



If there's one person in Victorian Greyhound racing that's just about done it all it would have to be former Chairman of the N.C.A. Ron Nestor.

Nestor has not only been an excellent trainer but has the most impressive record of any Administrator in the game. It all started back in 1943 when Ron's neighbour Bob Callaway the local grocer took him under his wing and introduced him the sport of greyhound racing.

"Bob was a successful trainer and a great bloke. I was in his company so much, people thought he was my father. He took me to the trials and the races, by train in those days. But it was open coursing in the winter that took my fancy most of all. Out in the paddocks around Diggers Rest, Toolen Vale, Sunbury and the Werribee district. To me coursing was the best sport ever and track racing was where you tried to beat the Bookmaker." Nestor said.

Nestor saw his first Waterloo Cup run at Maryborough in 1945, which was won by Minda West who beat Saphron

Light. The winner was trained by his good friend the late Gordon Harwood. Remarkable Harwood still held a trainer's licence well into his 80's.

Nestor slipped and judged open coursing until it was outlawed in 1964. When coursing changed to its present form he judged his first Waterloo Cup in 1962 and remained judge of that event until 1989 only missing once in 1967 at Lang Lang. Nestor became a member

of the National Coursing Association executive in 1954 and the treasurer in 1976, a position he filled until 1994. He was Vice President to the late Silvester Doyle and upon his death Ron became President a position he held until resigning in early 2001.

Nestor has also been a committee member of the Geelong Club for twelve years and at one time was the official clocker at Geelong's Cario Park and Ballarat's Broadway Park. In 1977 he was elected by the then minister of Sport to be a director of the G.R.C.B. and served the board for 22 years.

If that wasn't enough he has also served as Delegate and Treasurer of the Australian and New Zealand Greyhound Racing Association from 1967 until 1999.

"I have fond memories of my first Waterloo Cup as judge at Tatura in '62. It was won by Merriliegh Belle defeating Tarcoon. I remember that when the final course was completed, on the hare going through the escapes, the score was level and under the rules, I had to go back to the dog that scored the opening points for the lead to give the decision. It was justice that Tarcoon won the Cup the next year at Penhurst."

"The best I ever saw on the Plumpton was Byamee owned and trained by the late Ray Herbert. He won three successive Waterloo Cups in 53 at Bendigo, 54 at Tynong and 55 at Maryborough. He's the only dog in history to have done it and he stands alone in my opinion.

The best Bitch would be Noel Banks Merriliegh Belle, she divided a cup with her brother Loem at Penhurst in 61. Then she won that first Cup I judged the following year. Both dogs also won races on the speed tracks, Byamee behind the Pacemaker and Merriliegh Belle behind the Tin Hare in Victoria and N.S.W." Nestor continued.

Nestor finds it too hard to separate the many champion track dogs he's seen race over the years.

"You can't compare the times from one era to another, as tracks surfaces have changed so much. I don't think the dogs are any better now than the dogs I saw race 30 years ago." stated Nestor.

As a trainer Nestor won his first race at Tatura in 1951 with a bitch called Mondalla Pearl Tatura at that time had both a straight and circle track.

He trained winners at all the old tracks including the old Sandown Park when it was on the current racecourse site. Gracedale Park, North Melbourne, Olympic Park, Napier Park, Maribynong, White City, Nelson Park and Corio Parks in Geelong, Broadway Park in Ballarat, Warrnambool and Wonthaggi. He won races behind the Pacemaker and the Tin Hare.

Nestor finds the current standard stake money quite unbelievable.

"The only way we could get a quid was out of the punt in our day, no one had any money, and the train was our main form of transport. To get to coursing meetings we would pay two shillings for a ride in Charlie Hingston's bus, they were the best trips of my life. You were lucky if you had a pushbike back in those days. We raced for five to ten pounds in the country and 17 pounds 10 in the city. It cost 10 and sixpence to enter. When you consider the average wage in the 40's was five pound and about 15 pound in the 50's stake money has come a long way."

Nestor has fond memoirs of never missing an Australian or Melbourne Cup. He witnessed the first of each, won by Rookie Rebel and Rocketeer. He saw a few cups, in their previous form prior to how the records show them being acknowledged today.

Besides his enormous involvement in Greyhound Racing Nestor served the Victorian Police Force from 1949 to 1986 upon his retirement. Besides greyhounds, he also has a great love of horses and Horse Racing and for more than 30 years worked part time for the late Colin Hayes at stable Manager. Another institution he has been part of for a long time is the Royal Melbourne Show, Ron has officiated as Arena superintendent at each

show for the last 54 years. He also served, as a director of the Sandown Greyhound Racing Club in 1999 and 2000 and is a life member of both city clubs.

Ron has enjoyed a wonderful married life with his wife Anne and their family and in September 2005 the couple celebrated their 55st wedding anniversary.



Ron was acknowledged in the year 2000 for his services to Greyhound Racing when he was awarded the Australian Sports Medal. During the past International Carnivals Ron like most of us became very friendly with a number of the overseas visitors and Ron has enjoyed two delightful trips travelling to Ireland to be spoilt by that country's gracious hospitality. His first trip in 1999 fore-filled a lifetime ambition to see coursing at Ireland's famous Clonmel meetings and another trip in 2001 with Anne was also very special. (Anne passed away in 2017).

I asked him what the future held.

"Certainly, my administration days are over, but I won't be missing from the track I still very much enjoy the company of the people involved and I attend nearly every city meeting. I hope to continue for some time as the sports been great to me, I reckon I owe it. I'll never forget the friendships I've made over 50 years and the great times I've had over that time. If I've been able to put a bit back in, then it's all been worth it. I hope I can continue to do so, I've loved every minute of it." Nestor concluded.

He contributed right up until his passing and is remembered each year with the Ron Nestor Memorial conducted by both city clubs. At the suggestion of Ron's daughter Ronda in 2019 the race will be renamed the Schofield-Nestor Memorial.

Ron was inducted into the Victorian Hall of Fame in 2008, along with his best mate and another greyhound racing legend, George Schofield, who we lost in October 2017 Schofield, was 99. George said the following of Ron after his induction.

"He was a great bloke and a great family man. If you wanted a drink you knew he'd be there with you. I couldn't believe what a good mate he was and there couldn't have possibly been a better person than Ron. There is no one worthier to go into the Hall of Fame."

Nestor's devotion to greyhound racing over a long period is testimony to that. Ron, Nestor's record as a volunteer in sports administration is a bit like Bold Trease's four Sandown Cups, it won't be equalled. It is a record he and his family can be very proud of as he's served the sport he came to love as a young man with great distinction. There's no doubt Greyhound Racing has benefited from his enormous contribution.

By Neil Brown