

AGRA HALL OF FAME

Sandi's Me Mum

Brindle Bitch

(Red Swinger x Sandilock)

Whelped June 1987

Trainer: G.O'Keefe Owner: G.O'Keefe and B.Lorrimar

Year of Induction 2001

92 stars: 62 wins and 18 placings

1989 and 1990 WA Greyhound of the Year

In 1990, the World Greyhound Federation voted her one of the world's eight best greyhounds

Career prizemoney: \$272,831

Feature Career Wins Included:

1989 Sandown Laurels, 1989 West Australian Winter Cup, 1989 National Sprint Title, Cannington

1989 Cannington Invitation, 1990 Anniversary Cup, Cannington, 1990 Adelaide Cup, Angle Park

1990 WA Winter Cup, Cannington, 1990 National Sprint Title, Sandown, 1991 All Star Classic, Cannington

1991 Mandurah Cup, 1991 Ansett Breeders Stake, Cannington

Career Track Records:

1989 Anniversary Cup, Cannington – (31.59)

1990 West Australian Winter Cup, Cannington – (31.24)

1990 Qualifying State Final Cannington – (31.67)

Sandi's Me Mum was fortunate to only ever suffer a shoulder injury in her illustrious career.

Sandi's Me Mum was crowned Western Australia 's 1989 Greyhound of the Year in a unanimous 8-0 vote.

Sandi's Me Mum became only the fourth greyhound to secure the prestigious Adelaide Cup-Anniversary Cup double in the same year and went on to become the first greyhound to clinch back to back National Sprint titles in the event's 26-year history.

She was again crowned Western Australian Greyhound of the Year in 1990, and was also voted one of the world's best eight greyhounds for 1990 by the World Greyhound Federation in Massachusetts, United States.



Sandi's Me Mum was officially retired at four years of age. The greyhound fraternity Australia wide, during January 2002 was saddened to learn of the death of Western Australian stalwart Gerry O'Keefe. The likeable former Victorian had devoted a life time to the sport he loved and reached the highest of absolute highs of greyhound racing with a number of top-class performers, but the best was without doubt AGRA Hall of Famer the brilliant Sandi's Me Mum. She was nationally acknowledged as one of the best where ever she raced either on home soil in the west or in a major event interstate. The small, but extra strong brindle bitch blazed a trail of outstanding performances that stamped her, for all time in a class of her own.

Sandi's Me Mum is a greyhound that will never be forgotten when past champions come up in conversations. Bred, reared, raced and trained by O'Keefe, I had the good fortune in 1995 to speak at length with O'Keefe about the apple of his eye Sandi's Me Mum. Here is the story behind one of the very best of all time.

How Gerry O'Keefe came to breed one of the most outstanding litters to race in modern time, dates back to late 1979 when he bought a brindle bitch pup from Ballarat breeder Rex Taylor. She turned out to be a talented race bitch named Blazenka's Pride.



O'Keefe put Blazenka's Pride to Victorian sire Pearl King with the litter of eight producing brilliant sprinter Sandilock, a winner of 14 races. Only injury halted what would have been a star-studded career. Her retirement was to prove timely, as she was to become the ultimate dam of Sandi's Me Mum.

O'Keefe had trained the long tails for some 50 years since his early days as a young man living in Warrnambool. The craft was handed down from his father before him. I asked O'Keefe how he came to choose sire Red Swinger for Sandilock's first litter.

"On pure breeding alone he was an exceptionally well bred dog by Temlee from Tara Silk. I just liked those lines, I reckoned it would click with my dam line."

And click it certainly did. Whelped June 1987, the litter won 196 races. Besides the champ there was her sister Sand Pebble, who was considered a champion in her own right being a multi-feature winner and record holder. Modern Flight, the other bitch in the litter, won about 14 races. Then there were the dogs, Sanislad and Sonny Lad; both raced by O'Keefe. Sanislad won 43 races but was nearly put down after he dropped a back muscle as a pup. On the way to the vet O'Keefe felt he looked too good, so he arranged five months in a long run for the dog and the damage was repaired. The other three dogs Sonny Lad, Red Swirl and Kwinana's Pride all won races without hitting any great heights.

In an outstanding race career Sandi's Me Mum won 15 finals. She raced on 92 occasions posting 62 wins and 18 placings, with prize money totalling a mammoth \$272,831

The champion didn't win her first race until her third start, but after three wins from seven starts, she was placed in the care of Melbourne trainer Mary Leishout for tilts at the Olympic Park Maturity and the Sandown Laurels. In a fine effort, she was runner-up in the Maturity to the ill-fated Best Of Blue. It was one of the best final fields ever assembled. Sandi's Me Mum beat home Kareem, Hua, Farmer George and National Asset. It was a definite indication of what was to come as, next up she won the Sandown Laurels in 30.44.

On returning home to Perth she won the '89 West Australian Winter Cup and her first National Sprint Championship on home soil at Cannington in 31.78. Before the National Sprint win she broke the first of her records at Cannington, she recorded 31.59 and taking .04 off her sister Sand Pebble's time standard. An indication of the form she was in at the time, she came out the following week and lowered her own record to 31.53. Next came the 1990 Adelaide Cup leading all-the-way in 30.23, the field included Ginger, Eureka Man, Braw Laddie, Never Short and High Echo.

Back home, her major win was the Trusty Highlight Gift. She then returned to Adelaide for a win in the Anniversary Cup, the prize money she won made her the highest stakes winner in Australian greyhound racing history. The champ was to break the Cannington record again in her second Winter Cup win, running 31.24 and breaking Sand Pebble's mark of 31.37. Next came her second National Sprint Championship title at Sandown in 1990.



With most of the focus on super Victorian bitch Highly Blessed, Cuddles jumped to the front from box seven and led all the way to become the first greyhound in the event's 31-year history to win the race back-to-back. Another Australian record occurred in the National Final when Sandi's Me Mum became the first greyhound to win over \$200,000 in stake money.

During 1991, Sandi's Me Man registered wins in the All-Star Classic at Cannington (31.43), the Mandurah Cup in a record time of 31.41, breaking her brother Sandislad's time standard of 31.46, and the Ansett Breeders Stake (31.52) at Cannington. The champ was crowned Western Australian Greyhound of the Year in 1989 and 1990 and voted one of the world's best eight greyhounds for performances in 1990, by the World Greyhound Federation.

Remarkable O'Keefe only kept two dogs and the bitch from the litter, selling the rest. At the time he lived on a one-acre property at Canningvale, 20 kilometres from Perth and only reared three pups at the time in a 30-metre by 10-metre run. He did paddock gallop them a fair bit and let them go into the bush. O'Keefe didn't reckon that did them any harm while they were growing up. O'Keefe used to break his pups in at about 13 months. He would take anything up to a good six months to break them in, so it was a gradual process. He started them off in the bullring then moved them on to the trial tracks. Building the pups up in distance as they come along. He told me he didn't think you knew what you had until you started trialing them on the racetracks. Sandi's Me Mum didn't show much early but then it just clicked. The first time he ran her over 410 metres on the grass at Mandurah she ran 25.20, which is very ordinary. The second week she ran 24.20, she had found a whole second. The time was equivalent to Grade two or three class in 1989. In her next run she ran about 24.18, he then stepped her up to 530. She ran 31.60 first up, then improved that time to 31.44 which was well above average. Once she started racing she improved quite steadily and just got better and better.

O'Keefe and fellow part owner, his close friend of 25 years Betty Lorrimar had several offers for "Cuddles", but never considered any, they got as high as \$40,000 after she won the Laurels, but she was not for sale at any price. She received her unusual name courtesy of her dam Sandilock, whose kennel name was Sandy.

Known throughout her career as a talented front-runner, Sandi's Me Mum enjoyed being injury free during most of the period she raced. She only once missed a race start due to injury. It was after her fourth start when she injured her shoulder costing her 10 days.

Ironically, two years after she retired she fractured a hock tearing around O'Keefe's five-acre property at Banjup. O'Keefe told me he only ever race Sandi's Me Mum and never trialed her between races. Before she raced at tracks in the east, Sandown Park, Angle Park and Olympic Park, she had never put a paw on them. At Angle Park she ran 29.94-sight unseen.

Sandi's Me Mum had a reasonable amount of success as a brood bitch producing some top class greyhounds from her five litters. They consisted of her first litter whelped October '91 to Amerigo Man (two dogs and six bitches) with the best being a fawn bitch Sandi's Best.

Her second litter was to Amerigo Man's brother West Cape whelped May '92 (six dogs, one bitch) with the best being brindle bitch Love Me Bobby and track record breaking blue dog Our Boy Blue.

Cuddles whelped her third litter to Victorian star Welcome Stranger in June '93 (six dogs), producing two above average brindle dogs Handi's Me Name and Sandi's Andi. The champ's fourth litter was whelped February '94 (three dogs and one bitch) by imported sire Grove Whisper and a final litter by New Fox produced two bitches whelped August '96. Pups from those last two litters failed to produce any city winners.



Sandi's Me Mum was officially retired on 25 July 1991. For trainer Gerry O'Keefe and fellow owner Betty Lorrimar, Cuddles had given them the most enjoyable time anybody could ever experience in greyhound racing. It was a time when the champion was capable of rewriting the record books at any time she was sent to the boxes.

Again, pride and emotion spilt over when Sandi's Me Mum was inducted into the AGRA Hall of Fame at Brisbane 's Hilton Hotel at the Nationals dinner in 2002. There wasn't a dry eye in the Ball Room after Betty Lorrimar explained the pleasure that "Cuddles" had brought to both herself and the late Gerry O'Keefe and just how Gerry had adored his great champion. As these presentations have proved in the past and since they are extremely moving occasions.

By Neil Brown