

WORDS: SHARON HUNT [Executive Officer – NSWROA]

Max Whitby is a ‘man on a *mission*’

WHEN IT COMES TO A LOVE OF THE THOROUGHBRED INDUSTRY FEW WOULD BE ABLE TO COMPETE WITH THE PASSION AND ENTHUSIASM OF MAX WHITBY

Apart from his wife Jennifer and daughters, thoroughbreds are the greatest love in Max Whitby’s life.

After some 35 years in the ‘business’ you would think that he would have seen it all! Not true, according to Max who is a NSW Racehorse Owners Association committee member and recently appointed Sydney Turf Club director.

“There are always new issues that arise and things to learn in our wonderful industry and I am a great believer in the value of knowledge,” he said.

Having been involved in all facets of the industry – racing, a syndicate member, breeding and punting – Max has a great understanding of the operational, business, regulatory and gaming components required to succeed.

So what drives him to constantly want more for the industry that he loves with a passion?

“Our main concern at the moment would surely have to be funding for the industry. It is essential that all race fields fees levied are paid, for without them distribution monies will decrease and some clubs may have to close their doors.”

Those who know Max Whitby will confirm that his enthusiasm for the industry has no bounds.

A long time associate remarked: “There are no half

measures as far as Max is concerned – he is a man who speaks his mind and ‘goes for it’. His enthusiasm and passion together with his wisdom and knowledge will be of tremendous value to the STC and racing generally.”

So where did it all start with Max’s “obsession” with the thoroughbred industry, you may well ask?

Max was born in the country hamlet of Bangalow and raised by his grandparents and he remembers sitting in the back of his grandfather’s bread truck making deliveries to the rural community. He soon became “addicted” to country life and was employed as a jackeroo at Willow Tree.

He came to the ‘big smoke’ in 1967 bringing stock to the Royal Easter Show; he saw the city lights and never went back.

It soon became apparent that he had flair, not only in the hospitality industry where he was employed at the Texas Tavern in Kings Cross, but also in the financial sector, where he was employed by Nicholls, a rural commodity firm.

It is amazing and ironic at times how things worked out with former co-worker at Nicholls, Michael Kenny, again working with Max, this time at Sydney Turf Club.

In 1991 Max established L Quay Futures Brokers and was its founding managing director. His innovative thinking, well managed risk and strong management



ABOVE: Max Whitby (centre) with wife Jennifer and Brother Dan Stafford at the 2009 NSWROA Sydney Cup Day Luncheon
 TOP: Savabeel wins the 2004 W S Cox Plate. Picture by Steve Hart

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allowed him to develop L Quay into a highly successful futures trading firm.

It was the first of its kind in Australasia, offering specialist broking services to high net worth professional traders. The company was sold in 2005 to ABN Amro.

Following the successful sale of L Quay Futures Brokers in 2005, Max set up Propex Derivatives as a privately-owned company and a member of the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX).

Propex provides capital for experienced derivatives traders and training for prospective graduates to trade the domestic and global derivatives markets.

The education programs offer a six-month paid training course which is used as an incubator to provide successful traders to utilise the Propex capital for returns to the business.

This concept is recognised within the industry as the foundation for successful derivatives traders. At present, Propex has 80 traders and a training group of 40 graduates.

At the same time as he was 'conquering' the futures market, Max was introduced to leading trainers at Randwick which resulted in many successful partnerships. His recalls his first winner was at Newcastle and it was trained by Ken Lantry.

nsw racehorse owners

Over the years Max has raced many successful gallopers with the late Bruce Reid (who he describes as one the great gentlemen of the industry), but without doubt the best was the Group 1-MVRC W S Cox Plate winner Savabeel (Zabeel (NZ)-Savannah Success).

Savabeel faced the starter 14 times for 3 wins, 3 seconds and a third for \$2.76million in stakes. He was successful in the Gr 1-Cox Plate (defeating the likes of Fields of Omagh, who won the race on two occasions) and Starcraft (a multiple Group 1 winner in Australia, New Zealand and France).

He was second on three occasions in the Gr 1-C F Orr Stakes (behind Elvstroem), the Gr 1-VRC Derby (behind Plastered) and the Gr 2-STC Gloaming Stakes (behind Al Maher).

His only third (Gr 1-AJC Champagne Stakes) was to Dance Hero who was unstoppable in his two-year-old season, taking the 2YO Triple Crown and the Magic Millions in Qld.

Max retained his holding in Savabeel when he was retired to Waikato Stud in New Zealand in 2005 which was another prudent move as Savabeel is proving to be quite an impressive and popular young sire.

Already Savabeel has had three Black Type winners – My Emotion (Gr 3-VRC Thoroughbred Breeders Stakes), Queen Sabeel (Listed-Northland Breeders Stakes) and Warrenterooster (Listed-Wanganui Guineas and second in the Listed-ARC Champagne Stakes).

Savabeel is fully booked for the 2009 breeding season.

Max said there are exciting times ahead with the progeny of Savabeel and he is backing his stallion with his mares. He currently has 11 Savabeel's in work and if their potential is realised, we will probably see them in the Whitby colours racing in Australia.

Econsul (NZ) (Pins-Gypsy Soul (NZ)) was another Group 1 winner for Max and Bruce Reid, this time in the Caulfield Guineas defeating the likes of Fastnet Rock, Dane Shadow and Charge Forward – all of whom have made impressive starts to their breeding careers.

Econsul recorded three wins (including the Gr 1-Caulfield Guineas and Listed-Widden Stakes), a second placing and three thirds (including the Gr 1-VRC Cadbury Guineas and Gr 3-STC Skyline Stakes) for some \$884,600 in prizemoney from his 28 race starts. He retired to stud in 2007 and now calls Woodside Park in Victoria home.

Although he no longer owns Econsul, Max has supported the stallion sending a mare (in conjunction with

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NSWROA president, Ray McDowell, and leading trainer Kevin Moses) in the two seasons he has stood to date.

Another successful partnership Max has had is with the legendary Sir Patrick Hogan who, together with trainer Graeme Rogerson, currently race Penrickson (NZ) who has recorded 7 wins, 2 seconds and 5 thirds from his 37 race starts.

His best win to date was in the STC Lord Mayors Cup (defeating Prince Arthur, Keepin' the Dream (NZ), Ready to Lift, etc) and he has been Stakes-placed on three occasions.

Max is renowned for “having a heart as big as himself” and he has raised extensive funding of behalf of many charities including St Vincent de Paul, the Matthew Talbot Hostel, Redkite, Bravehearts and the Kings Cross Bed Race, to name but a few.

He is also a past president and member of the Rotary Club of Kings Cross (where he was honoured with the Paul Harris Fellowship Award); a past president & committee person of the Kings Cross Community Centre for the Aged; a member of the Kings Cross Chamber of Commerce; a director and past president of the Sydney Aussie Rules Club (now know as Club Swans) and a Justice of the Peace.

When asked what best describes his time in the racing industry to date Max replied: “I have experienced the highs and lows of the game; from owning a Cox Plate and Caulfield Guineas winner, to seeing one of my horses run last at a dusty western NSW country racetrack.

“Racing is a great leveller and I love it. I am also honoured to be a Life Member of and to serve on the NSWROA Committee as well as my recent appointment to the committee of the Sydney Turf Club.”

If you are interested if participating in the wonderful world of thoroughbred racing and would like to become a member of the NSW Racehorse Owners Association, simply visit our website - www.nswroa.com.au - or telephone NSWROA on (02) 9299 4299 **RNSW**