

INK MAKES HIS MARK AT BARASTOC HOTY

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The Romsey Park team once again had a triumphant showing at this year's Barastoc HOTY. Christine Frost's beautiful black Thoroughbred Ink, winner of the prestigious Open Large Hack class, was among their success stories.

Now in its 54th year, Barastoc Horse of the Year Show is one of the most eagerly anticipated events among the Victorian show horse community and has evolved greatly since it was first staged at Melbourne's Olympic Park dog track in 1970.

Originally a "fill-in" competition for the showjumping championships, it quickly becoming an event in its own right. Shifting to the Melbourne Showgrounds seven years in, it then moved to Werribee Park Equestrian Centre in 1991, where the most recent edition of the show has just been held. An important event that has contributed immensely to the development of the sport of showing in Victoria in many ways, it has long been a qualifier for the EA Australasian Show Horse and Rider Championships – as it was this year.

At that very first Barastoc HOTY show, an elegant grey by the name of Lure won the Show Hack class. The off-the-track Thoroughbred was owned by Donnie Wilson and ridden by Malcolm Barns, and went on to win the class twice again in coming years. Fifty-four years later, and among many impressive results by a range of competitors across three big days of competition, another handsome Thoroughbred has claimed the coveted Open Large Hack title.

CHRISTINE & INK



Off-the-track Thoroughbred Ink (racing name Occy's Gold) with owner Christine Frost. © Angie Rickard Photography.

"I'm so lucky... I look at him when he's out in the ring and I still cannot believe that he's my horse!" says Christine Frost, owner of Ink – this year's Champion Open Large Hack. The handsome black Thoroughbred has enjoyed many successes in the show ring over the years, but his doting owner says this latest accolade is up there with the best of them.

"Winning the class is a dream. It's just about the biggest class in Victoria and it was beautiful to be called out first," she says, crediting Romsey Park's Greg Mickan and Terry Van Heythuysen with helping her to train and produce the horse. "It's all due to Terry and Greg; they produce him to look and work so beautifully," she says, explaining it was very much a team effort, with Greg hopping on to ride the horse's workout.

Racing as Occy's Gold, the rising 12-year-old black gelding, by Octagonal out of Cadgee Gold, had eight starts but failed to impress on the track with only a little over \$3000 to show for his efforts. Christine explains that while he has little interest in being a racehorse, his potential as a show horse was evident from early on: "Lee Purchase saw him at the races in Geelong and rang Terry and said, 'You've got to buy this horse, he'll make a nice hack'.

So they got on the phone to his breeder, Tee Triden from South Australia, and negotiated... that night they picked him up in the dark from the racehorse transport that was heading back from Geelong to his racing stables near Wodonga."

The moment he arrived at Romsey Park, Christine fell in love. "He was stabled beside my hunter horse that I had at the time, and I said, 'Oh, I really love him. I think he's beautiful'. I eventually purchased him in May 2017," she explains. "He went to his first show in September that year and he won the Supreme Led and Champion Ridden Hack that day."

Ink was six when he first arrived at Romsey Park – and he's never left. "Greg started him and has always ridden him, and I also ride him a lot. He's carried a few people to champion rider wins. He's won the turnout at Sydney with Stephanie Barrington. He started in the Garryowen last year, and at Barastoc this year he was also Supreme Champion Led OTT and Reserve Champion Childs Hack."

Christine explains that she's "the sitter" at big shows, allowing Greg to often ride the workouts – but she enjoys riding at the smaller shows and is regularly in the saddle at home. "He's great to ride; he never argues with you," says Christine, adding that like any special horse, he of course has his quirks: "If you ride him past something that wasn't there the day before, it's like, 'Oh, what's that?' Yet you can take him to a big show and he'll canter pasts all the whirligigs and he's like, 'I can do it!'"

"He loves his life at Romsey Park – they are very well cared for there – and he's got his own little paddock and he's a stickybeak, so he likes the paddock that he's in because he sees people coming and going from the stable to the house and from the stable to the arena. He's got a witch's hat, that's his toy... he plays with it like a puppy and throws it around. He just loves it and sometimes you think he's going to kill it and he goes almost down on his front knees, just to try and squash it. Then he'll pick it up and throw it in the air and sometimes it goes over the fence, so we all have to go and fetch it and throw it back across to him. He does like to wreck his rugs, but aside from that, he's about the perfect horse. Luckily I can sew!"

A poster boy for Barastoc, Ink has long been fed their feeds – as is the entire Romsey Park team, with Greg one of the brand's ambassadors. Christine says her horse is a great eater, however, in the early days he did take some convincing when it came to carrots: "It took me nearly a year to get him to eat a carrot, because he'd never had a treat... so that was a bit of a drag! I tried everything: grating them, cooking them, hiding them in things. I think he thought I was trying to poison him. Once he actually crunched one and got over the noise that it made, he realised it really wasn't so bad. Now he loves them!"

Ink's next stop is Canberra Royal, followed by the Grand National Show Horse & Rider Championships and Sydney Royal in April, and then Melbourne Royal in spring and the Australasian Show Horse and Rider Championships later in the year. "The Grand Nationals is exciting because the English judges ride the top 10 and he's so fabulous to ride. He did win it a couple of years ago and I'm excited to do that again."

"He's been showing for a long time, so we are picking and choosing what we do with him now. I think I'm going to retire him from led classes, because winning Supreme OTT at Barastoc just now was a nice way to finish."



Christine says Ink will never be sold and will retire at her farm in Heathcote. © Angie Rickard Photography.

“I just wish I could roll back the clock and have him again at six years old,” says Christine, adding that there are no plans to ever sell him, and that when the time comes he’ll retire to her farm in Heathcote and spend his days riding quietly through the paddocks with her. “I always said I’m going ride him until he’s grey, and I probably will.”

FURTHER SUCCESS FOR ROMSEY PARK

As has often been the case in previous years, Romsey Park had a wonderful Barastoc HOTY. Greg rode a few winners himself, including Stephanie Barrington’s Global PPS in the Newcomer Small Show Hunter Hack and Small Show Hunter Hack classes, and Linden Hearn’s Totality in the Newcomer Large Hack class. Steph was also successful herself, riding Global PPS to take out the Rider 26 Years & Over title. Also, long part of the Romsey Park stable, Emily Murray was successful in the Small Show Hunter Galloway class with her own Riegal Manolete.

“Terry and I were extremely happy with the way our team of horses worked and the results we came away with,” says Greg of the team’s success. “It’s a huge effort to get 11 horses down to Werribee but we feel they all worked very well in their respective classes. We have a great team and owners, which makes it very enjoyable.”

Besides the incredible atmosphere at Barastoc HOTY, Greg says one of his favourite aspects of the show is the pressure of trying to qualify for the EA Australasian Show Horse and Rider Championships – ‘The Nationals’ – which are to be held in Sydney later this year. “We qualified eight horses in 12 classes... so very pleasing results!”



Barastoc Ambassador Greg Mickan riding Stephanie Barrington’s Global PPS. © Angie Rickard Photography.

AN ENDURING PARTNERSHIP

As a Barastoc Ambassador, Greg explains that the Romsey Park horses have long enjoyed Barastoc feeds. “Our team is fed [Barastoc Breed N Grow](#) as their base feed, and then they are topped up with [Barastoc Supreme](#) for the added topline and shine, as well as [Barastoc Groom](#).”

Romsey Park has enjoyed a lengthy partnership with its feed sponsor, however Barastoc HOTY show boasts an even longer connection with the brand. Barastoc – which as a company dates back to the 1930s – has been with the event since its inception in 1970 and their naming-rights sponsorship has continued for 54 years through five company ownership changes. A remarkable feat, and the longest running continuous sponsorship in the Australian equestrian industry.