

# Beyond The Barriers NZ

Showcasing the potential of Thoroughbreds as Sporthorses

Two Cambridge women with a passion for Thoroughbreds are behind a new not-for-profit organisation aimed at educating people about the potential of retired racehorses as sporthorses.

Gina Schick, wife of Windsor Park Stud co-owner and stud manager Rodney Schick, and Nicky Wallace, wife of bloodstock agent Michael Wallace, jointly launched Beyond The Barriers NZ late last year after years in the pipeline.

"We had been talking about doing something for a long time. It's about educating people from both sides (the racing industry and sporthorse) about the very realistic option of successfully re-homing retired racehorses," said Schick, who has successfully rehomed thousands of horses since starting her business EventStars seven years ago.

"There are a lot of misconceptions out there about Thoroughbreds. People need to know that these horses have been extremely well-fed, looked after and educated from the start, and despite being retired from racing, still have plenty of life left to live."

Although the success of Thoroughbreds in the sport of eventing was well documented, she said off-the-track (OTT) thoroughbreds could be equally successful across all disciplines, from showing and showjumping, to western and pleasure hacks, given the right home and proper training.

"Beyond The Barriers NZ provides a forum to educate and communicate with people who may be able to provide suitable post-racing homes for Thoroughbreds, as well as those in the sporthorse industry who want to become involved in the Thoroughbred industry."

Schick said in time, they also hoped to organise specialised clinics to help people retrain retired Thoroughbreds, as well as showcasing those Thoroughbreds that had gone into successful careers as sporthorses. Its focus was not only on failed racehorses or untried Thoroughbreds, but the well-performed ones as well. "We really want to provide futures for these horses. A good athlete is a good athlete, no matter the discipline."

As part of Beyond the Barriers NZ's bid to promote the breed's adaptability and



BEYOND THE BARRIERS NZ FOUNDERS GINA SCHICK (LEFT) ON BOARD JEFF MASSINO, FORMALLY TRAINED BY PETER AND JACOB MCKAY, AND NICKY WALLACE (RIGHT).

versatility, 14 riders were approached to be part of a unique competition to be held at Equidays this October. With the generous support of Dunstan Feeds, the Dunstan Ex-Factor will see riders show-off their OTT Thoroughbred as they best see fit over three days of competition building up to the Dunstan Cup where they will be judged by a panel with expert knowledge of what it takes to re-train a Thoroughbred.

Schick said riders taking part were required to source their own Thoroughbred on the condition that it had no prior sporthorse training and was somehow connected to the New Zealand Thoroughbred industry, as either New Zealand bred or raced.

The riders taking part include top eventers such as Samantha Felton, Donna Smith and duo Tessa Jacks and Fraser King, to adventurer Chloe Phillips-Harris, former jockey-turned-trainer Chad Ormsby, western rider Tui Griffiths of Inova Stud in Wanganui, mounted games aficionado Scott Borland, and sole South Island young equestrienne Jess Land, to name a few.

And while the list of four-legged contestants was not yet complete, of those announced to date all are NZ bred and most have won at least one race. The line-up includes former top racehorses Fritzzy Boy, now 10 and a winner of no less than 15 of his 81

starts amassing more than \$843,000 in stakes over his seven-year racing career, and Lisa Latta's former eight-year-old stable star Justanexcuse, who pocketed \$306,408.95 from his 62 starts. There are also a number of younger prospects with Itsatry, an unraced son of Sakhee's Secret now known as Ricker Ridge Mystery Man, and Mr Topz (by Patapan) amongst the youngest at just four-years-old.

Schick said riders had from now until Equidays in October to train and produce each of their mounts. It's a big ask, but the riders have got behind it 100 per cent, with many more signalling they want to be part of it in the future. "We deliberately kept it small this year, inviting riders but the response has been overwhelming." For some the horses were long term propositions, while others were purchased specifically for the competition, she added.

The racing industry had also got right behind the organisation, with NZTR pledging their support. Schick and Wallace were especially grateful to Sonya Anderson, who had stepped in to produce its sponsorship proposal, graphic designer Chanel Campbell from designed by CCC, who had designed its logo and that of the Dunstan Ex-Factor, and PalaMountains Animal Nutrition, who had signed up to sponsor a class. ■