

Irishman runs an eye over Aussie racing



Irishman John Condon gets to work on his documentary at Albion Park.

AUSSIE champ Brett Lee has inspired a 38-year-old Irishman to head Down Under to compile a documentary on greyhound racing here and in New Zealand.

John Condon and his family, specially his dad Liam, have been pottering about with greyhounds in Dublin for decades, but mostly for the past five years.

“We only have three or four dogs at any time and a few saplings on the way up,” said John.

A psychiatric nurse, Condon decided to come to Australia and NZ on a working holiday. He has a bitch with the kennel name Zoe at home and has based the documentary around her.

“Basically I have made the documentary about Zoe and her inclinations towards the Aussie champ Brett Lee, but while that is a fun side to the start and finish of the documentary, in between we take a serious look at racing here and in NZ,” said Condon.

He has included segments around tracks, trainers, stud farms and Aussie legends like Brett Lee himself and highlights Queensland’s Tony Zammit and his latest star Surf Lorian.

But in the meantime he has got a first hand look at just how greyhound racing runs Down Under. And not surprisingly he has pluses and minuses for our sport.

“Track maintenance in Australia is the best,” he said.

“We have a lot to learn in Ireland about that aspect of racing.

“And vet examinations at kenneling is another aspect we do not give enough importance to in Ireland.

“But race attendance is huge in Ireland. A real young persons sport these days even though they may not be so involved in the racing itself.

“But we have no TAB and no home coverage of greyhound racing in Ireland.”

Condon’s documentary includes more than five hours of footage which he will edit when he gets back home in July and hopes to have for sale by Irish Derby time in September.

He will not compare dogs on two different countries, but is adamant the great Irish galloper Late Late Show just might have been able to run down Brett Lee.

He’s so impressed with Brett Lee, his race career and early stud start, he has bought a just-born bitch out of Cyclone Kelly to take home to Ireland.

“Greyhound breeding is a lot more advanced in Australia,” said Condon.

He says eight runners in a race is great as compared to six at home, but feels Australians would benefit from seeding dogs between railers and wide runners. He admits there is a bit of controversy in Ireland about the influx of Australian stud dogs to that country.

“Many studmasters feel a lot of the top class Irish dogs are not being used because of the number of Aussie dogs in Ireland,” he said.

He particularly thanked Tony Zammit for the role he played in the documentary.