

Gabba champ lucky to have survived



***Jamie McTavish
who bred the great bitch
Coonowrin Bess***

By DAVID BRASCH

SHE spent months as a pup confined to a box, four feet by two feet and only three feet high ... but she turned out to be one of the best greyhounds this state produced achieving a remarkable feat around the Gabba.

She was Coonowrin Bess (Call Me Roscoe-Donark Bess) who at two months of age ran into a house stump and pulled her leg out of its socket.

It was doubtful the bitch would ever race, let alone reach the heights she did.

It is a little known story behind Coonowrin Bess who eventually landed in the Ray Gatti kennel and went on to become the first to win over all four distances at the Gabba, 420m, 558m, 704m and 895m.

Jamie McTavish bred the bitch from his former outstanding galloper Donark Bess ... a bitch Jamie got as a three-year-old maiden who was on her fourth trainer.

“Donark Bess came from South Australia where she had only ever raced on sand tracks,” said Jamie. “I put her on the grass up here and she went fantastic.”

To the stage that Donark Bess won 20 races in all and three at the Gabba. She was four and a half when she retired and produced a number of litters with quality performers in most.

Her first mating was to Mister Oollee and produced the top flight galloper Truly Oollee.

“The Call Me Roscoe litter was her last,” said Jamie who only recently has got back into greyhounds helping out Jim Conlon.

“I’d sold a few, but this bitch as two months old when she ran under the house and hit a stump. She pulled the leg out of the socket and could not walk.”

Jamie rushed the bitch to Ian McBryde’s surgery at Albany Creek.

“Ian was on holidays at the time and a young guy was running the surgery,” said Jamie. “I can’t remember his name, but he opened her up and stitched the leg back together.”

The vet suggested the bitch pup be confined to the 4x2x3 foot box.

“We put her in there for a couple of months because the vet said she should not be allowed to move at all to allow the injury to heal,” said Jamie.

“My kids were seven and four at the time and they talked me into going through the operation with her and the process of getting her right. I had sold the rest of the litter.”

Jamie was planning to keep the bitch for himself until Allan Cameron approached him about buying a pup from the litter. By this time the bitch was “about six or seven months old”.

“I gave Allan the bitch,” said Jamie.

“After what had happened to her, I couldn’t ask anyone to pay for her. He said she would go up to Ray Gatti to be reared.”

Ray Gatti knew nothing of the bitch’s hip problem when she arrived at his Glasshouse Mountains property to complete her rearing.

Ray had initially approached McTavish to put Donark Bess to Call Me Roscoe.

“We had just got back from a campaign in Sydney with Roscoe when he mated that bitch,” he said.

When Cameron arrived with the pup, Ra admits he didn’t worry about her at all. “She never had a problem with the hip again,” he said. “She was really something old Bess.

“If I hadn’t been told she had hurt the hip, I would never have known about it.”

Ironically Call Me Roscoe’s own dam Frypan Lady almost died when she was a pup.

“That’s how she got her name, she was kept warm in a frying pan,” said Ray.

Gatti admits Coonowrin Bess was one of his favourites and the victory over 420m at the Gabba

which sealed her fame, one of his happiest times in greyhound racing.

“She had won over all the other distances and I always reckoned she could win over 420m,” he said. “I kept telling Bruce Beach (then working for the Harris family on their form guides) she would do it, but he thought I was mad.

“She had drawn box eight and was 14-1. I told Beachie he should back her, but he wouldn’t. She won by a couple of lengths.”

More amazing was the fact that only two weeks before her 420m Gabba win, she had been successful over 704m there.

While Bess was outstanding and achieved fame with that remarkable four distance feat, she was also a finalist in the 1984 Interstate Challenge, Lord Mayor’s Cup and Gabba Gold Cup.

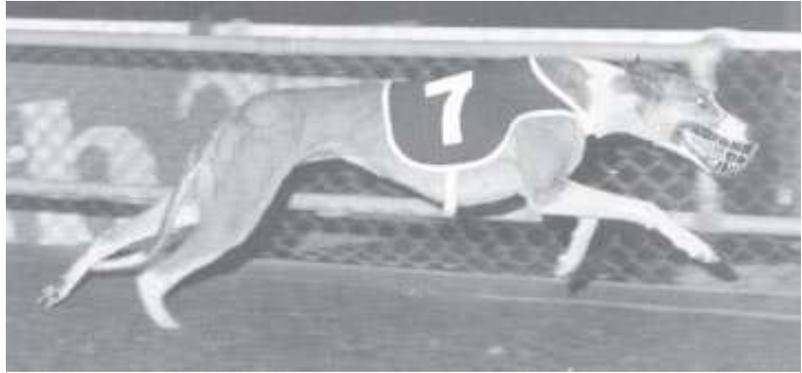
“She won 14 races, 10 at the Gabba and then produced White Coonowrin who won the Coca-Cola Cup for us at the Gabba,” said Ray.

Ray even admits Bess was “a bit of a fighter”.

“If she got checked in a race, she always took their number and would square up in the catching pen,” he said.

Ray Gatti is as proud of Coonowrin Bess and her feats as he is of his beloved Call Me Roscoe.

And Jamie McTavish is just as proud of the part he played in Bess’ life. He didn’t give up on her at a crucial time. Bess handled the rest.



Coonowrin Bess

		Thunder Lane
	Storkey Lane	Zoom Top
Call Me Roscoe		Ragsie
	Frypan Lady	Glide On
COONOWRIN BESS		Old Berry Hermes*
	Michael Hermes	Bon Fides
Donark Bess		Shan’s View
	Tebessa’s Joy	Tebessa