



Backgammon 'Jim' and Nicole Smith are in a happy new partnership

A game for 2 with Backgammon

NOT JUST A ROLL OF THE DICE, RETIRED THOROUGHBRED BACKGAMMON HAS PROVEN TO BE A GOOD STRATEGY FOR ONE LUCKY VICTORIAN RIDER WORDS: CAITLIN LEI SAM



Backgammon (Kerrin McEvoy) during his career on track with Darley. Picture by Bradley Photographers



Nicole Smith puts Backgammon over some jumps

Nicole Smith, from Marnic Park, Victoria, had always owned Thoroughbreds as show horses but when her old horse was ready to retire, an internet advertisement for the Thoroughbred Rehabilitation Trust (TRT) proved to be the first move in obtaining her newest stable star.

Purchased sight unseen, Smith trusted the knowledge and expertise of Scott Brodie, the Thoroughbred Retraining manager of the Program, which has helped rehome over 160 horses since its inception in 2011.

A picture of Backgammon on the TRT Facebook page was all that was needed, coupled with some phone calls to Brodie, a vet check, and Backgammon was loaded on a float to Victoria.

“At the time there were a few horses for sale but Backgammon had a real spunk about him and after speaking with Scott, I thought he would be perfect for what I wanted to do with him,” explained Nicole.

Backgammon proved to be very hard to abbreviate so he needed a nickname: “He just looks like a ‘Jim’ and I think he likes it. Jim is much

more personal but his show name remains as MP Backgammon.”

Smith is a member of Horse Riding Clubs Association of Victoria and their goal is to continue to give everything a go and to enjoy taking Jim as far as they can.

“We are doing consistently well in the show ring as well as dressage and show jumping, and our dream is to get around cross country this season.

“I usually get remarks from the judges along the lines of ‘lovely horse, great jump in canter, beautiful to watch ... rider could do more!’

“He is so smart and sensitive that I have recently begun lessons in horsemanship so we can improve on our communication.”

Without knowing much about his racing past, Smith knew Jim must have come from a large stud due to the ‘272/7’ on his shoulder (i.e. ‘272’ is the 272nd horse born on the property; the ‘7’ is the year 2007).

So after a bit of internet research, she found out that he was a pretty handy racehorse owned by Darley (Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum’s Australian enterprise).

He was born and trained in the

Hunter Valley NSW, but ironically won his biggest race in Melbourne, being the Listed-Myer Spring Fashion Stakes on Melbourne Cup Day in 2010.

The horse earned nearly \$200,000 in prizemoney from 13 starts and in his final race in 2011 he came 5th in the Group 1-South Australian Derby behind Shadows in the Sun.

“It was awesome to watch one of the races he won and to read a few articles about him. It really is a small world as I met someone who rode him in trackwork the first show we went to,” Nicole said.

“He’s the type of Thoroughbred who just accepts routine maintenance, he loves his food, is great to rug, drench, shoe, float, wash – as long as the water is warm! – so he must have been very well handled as a racehorse. He does not suffer fools so we have to keep the dog out of his way.

“He is so talented the sky really is the limit for this horse and I’m really looking forward to the journey with him.”

To read more stories like this, or to find out how you can help retired racehorses find new homes, visit – www.trt.org.au **RNSW**