



Apprentice jockey Andrew Adkins – already has 76 winners to his credit

Andrew's born to ride

LIVING ACROSS THE ROAD FROM A RACECOURSE, THE ODDS WERE FAIRLY SHORT THAT YOUNGSTER ANDREW ADKINS WOULD BE PART OF THE RACING INDUSTRY – ONE WAY OR ANOTHER

WORDS: MARK BRASSEL PICTURES: BRADLEY PHOTOGRAPHERS

From an early age apprentice jockey Andrew Adkins said he didn't have the need to attend vocation seminars at school – it was pretty clear cut what career path he would follow.

"I was always going to be a part of horse racing," the just turned 18-year-old quipped. "Living over the road from the racecourse, I would see the activity every day and I longed to be part of it."

Adkins grew up in Port Macquarie and his family tree also strongly suggested he would play a part in the horse racing industry.

"My dad Brett was a jockey but became too heavy so he then worked as the track curator at 'Port'. But dad injured his back so now he's a jockey manager for me, Raymond Spokes and Matthew Bennett.

"My pop was also a jockey, my mum Terry has ridden at pony club and my uncle is a trainer (Victorian Tony Vasil), so there's plenty of horse background in my family."

Adkins commenced work at the stables when still attending Year 10 at school and early on displayed solid dedication, attending trackwork from 4am before heading off to school for the day: "In the afternoon I'd return to the stables after school before going home for dinner."

Adkins has performed creditably having only been riding two years this November, less three months on the sideline due to injury.

"I broke my arm in a trackwork fall at Port and was off work for around three months," Adkins said.

Given the young jockey been race riding for just 22 months he has done extremely well to have guided home 76 winners. 73 have been in the Northern Rivers and Mid North Coast region, along with winners at Newcastle and Gosford, and one on the Gold Coast.



Andrew Adkins returns to scale aboard Marmaduke's Lady following their victory at Newcastle

Adkins nearly kick-started his riding career with the perfect start aboard Cracker Night at Taree in November 2013: "Unfortunately I was beaten a neck by Robert Agnew (Brock's Star). It would have been fantastic to win at my first ride."

Adkins, with an impressive 56 winners for the 2014/15 racing season, comfortably took out his initial NSW Country Apprentices' Premiership by 15 wins from Sophie Young (41 winners) and Melinda Graham (40).

The apprentice was last season's youngest winning rider in NSW at 16yo, having scored a double at Port Macquarie on 1 August 2014 just 29 days before his 17th birthday.

"Winning the title up here has been one of my goals and it is a

dream come true to have achieved a premiership so early in my career."

When in Year 10, Adkins rode for trainer John Sprague and also rode work for another local trainer, Wayne Wilkes. He is now apprenticed to Port trainer Marc Quinn who holds the young rider in high regards.

"Andrew has exceeded my expectations. He's quite well-grounded and has improved quite a bit over the past twelve months.

"If he keeps working hard I'll let him drift down to ride at the provincials of a Saturday and a bit more down the track, I believe he will be up to riding in the city. He is a good, hard-working kid."

Adkins said he doesn't base his riding style on any particular jockey but likes to extract bit and pieces from a range of hoops.

"I do watch many of them but I have always liked Tommy Berry who is an idol of mine. Wouldn't it be great if I could beat him in a finish in Sydney one day!" **RNSW**