

Flindell now 'calling' the shots

SINCE MAKING THE MOVE HOME FROM HONG KONG, RACECALLER DARREN FLINDELL IS FLYING HIGH WITH SKY AND LIVING OUT HIS CHILDHOOD DREAM WORDS: JENNY MCALPINE

Broadcaster Darren Flindell took over from Matt Hill last year to become Sky Racing's number one Sydney racecaller: "This is the job I have wanted since I was a kid," he exclaimed.

Flindell grew up listening to his heroes Bill Collins, Ian Craig and Wayne Wilson. His ears, eyes and dreams were finely tuned to their tones and talents. And it was those three men that shaped Flindell's views, fuelled his dreams and helped him on his way to professional success.

But it was Ian Craig whom he admired most and Flindell was at a time assistant to him on the track.

Back then as Sydney's leading caller, Ian Craig was his mentor and it was that job Darren dreamed of eventually obtaining; now having fulfilled that dream.

Flindell made his renewed calling debut on ATC's Golden Slipper Day 2015, just in time to take part in the newly-formed Sky Thoroughbred Central Broadcast Team and Foxtel (channel 521) before presenting and calling The Championships at Royal Randwick.

Nearly one year on and now back in Australia after 16 years in Hong Kong where he worked in one of the world's most competitive and well-watched racing arenas, Flindell reflects on his life and commentating career.

"I always wanted to be a presenter and caller. At the age of 15 I would skip school and sneak off to midweek meetings at Canterbury," Flindell said with a reminiscent smile.

"I had to avoid teachers who had done the same," he chipped.

"By the time I left school in 1986 I was practising on-course announcing and began to focus on the greyhounds and trots," he explained.



Darren Flindell – well and truly established back in Sydney

And so he began calling at Wentworth Park and Harold Park raceways and did so for nine years. Darren was eventually secured by Sky Channel (as it was known in those days) for television production and presentation across all three racing codes, a role allowing him the chance to grow his knowledge and experience. That was in 1995.

Excelling at Sky in local confines was not quite enough for the man with a passion for presenting, and with profound professional etiquette. Hong Kong was, no doubt, the next step for Darren.

His expertise caught the eye of the Asian Colony's racing rulers and he took up a position with Hong Kong Jockey Club in 1999 as racecaller and program presenter.

Darren was on his way to international recognition by default, and international education by determined choice.

Hungry and humble to learn, Flindell became a well-respected television talent.

Not only did he call races at Happy Valley and Sha Tin, but he presented his own racing preview show "Racing To Win" on the eve of each race meeting.

With his widening knowledge of the Asian racing scene and acutely executed calls, he was indeed the man to fill the polished shoes of David Raphael as Hong Kong's premier racecaller in 2007 upon David's retirement and return to Australia.

"I really wanted to take the next step in Hong Kong and achieve the highest level of responsibility and that opportunity presented when David decided to move on," Darren said.

"I very much enjoyed the Hong Kong life and the doors it opened for me. Hong Kong is a real hub to Asia and Europe and it allowed me great exposure and understanding of the global racing scene.

"With an 'off season' in Hong Kong I had time to travel to Europe and attend race meetings in that part of the world and learn as much as I could while Hong Kong was in racing recess," he said.

Now at the age of 46, Darren has done it. He has achieved at international heights developing wisdom with aplomb for his lifelong passion involving presenting and racing.

Flindell has reached the number one spot on the racing radio waves and TV screen of Sky.

"It is very intense, but it is here where I wish to be, at this level, and with Sky. It's great to be back.

"I only ever dreamed of following in the footsteps of Ian Craig and now I can barely believe I am here," said Flindell who is well and truly grounded in his 'Sky' high position. **RNSW**