

The Duff's a sure bet

RON DUFFICY HAS ALWAYS BEEN A 'SURE THING' FROM AN EARLY AGE TO REAP REWARDS IN THE THOROUGHBRED RACING GAME

WORDS: JENNY MCALPINE

A familiar face of Sky Racing, the ever popular "Duff" as he has been fondly donned, has been seen and heard with his punting picks and form previews for over two and a half decades across our television and radio airwaves.

A former jockey, Duff made the transition to transistor in 1989 when he first became the thoroughbred punter's mate, delivering "the late mail" on Sydney's Racing Radio 2KY.

Apprenticed at the age of 16, he describes himself as a "somewhat successful" jockey.

"I rode a couple of hundred winners with the most memorable winning the AJC Group 3 San Domenico Stakes for Tommy Smith on Gallery Level in 1986," Dufficy recalled.

"I also rode Beans for Singo (John Singleton) to take out the Group 3 Black Opal Stakes in Canberra."

Bart Cummings was Dufficy's master until a stable change to trainer Mal Barnes, with Ron having piloted some of the heroes in our history.

"I rode Red Anchor, who I think, could have been better than Kingston Town and Shaftesbury Avenue; what a great horse," he claimed.

Ten years on and numerous falls off, Ron retired from the riding ranks and took up radio ratings instead.

With race riding know how and nous, Sydney listened to his tips and tapped into his quips and punting previews with a passion. Ron was on his way and on the airwaves.

Still part of the jockey army but now on the ground studying the form, Ron with ideas and attitude, began booking rides on the side for jockey Jimmy Cassidy.

In effect he became the first ever "jockey manager" in Australia, sparking off a new line of thought for jockeys in their jobs.

Ron went on to manage Lenny Beasley who rode out his apprenticeship



Ron Dufficy at Royal Randwick alongside Gina Harding – a guest international UK presenter – with whom Dufficy worked with during The Championships

to become Sydney's number one.

Another decade on and Sky Channel was on the scene and on the screen. Racing Retro became the program to see for punters' news, previews and reviews.

Ron had the form and took up the running appearing on the Sky Sunday thoroughbred show with Graeme McNeice and Richard Freedman.

"It was great starting off back then in 2001 and I'm still here," laughed Ron. "And loving every minute!"

Ron is a regular on Racing Retro and Sky's Thursday night Form Line as well as Sky Sports Radio (Big Sports Breakfast on Saturday mornings).

If he is not busy enough, he pens previews and reviews in the Daily and Sunday Telegraphs in Sydney.

Ron will soon set foot on the Royal Randwick turf to present The Championships on Sky Thoroughbred Central (Foxtel 521).

"It's the highlight of my year and I look forward to seeing the international horses and all the great Aussie horses

step out.

"With The Championships and country and provincial racing going forward, racing in NSW is going in the right direction," he commented.

Ron burns for racing and the horse. It's been his life all his life.

Born into the game playing the game, Ron laughs when he proudly claims he was taking bets on the phone at the age of 10.

"My dad was an SP bookmaker ... and so was my mum! I was always involved and got the bug young, not only for the racing game but for the love of the horse."

There was no doubting Ron's route in life. He was always a sure thing to be in racing and when asked of the highlight of his career "just doing every day what I love ... my job."

*Ron Dufficy won the 2015 TAB Champion Tipster during The Championships, with \$5000 going to his nominated charity, Motor Neurone Disease Association of NSW. **RNSW**