

LIFE 'REINS' SUPREME FOR COSSIE

THERE'S NOT MUCH SHAWN COSGROVE HAS NOT TRIED HIS HAND AT – TV & RADIO ANNOUNCER, TRACKWORK RIDER, VOICEOVER ARTIST AND EVEN CREATING CUSTOM HORSE EQUIPMENT BY HAND

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ABOVE: Shawn Cosgrove (left) with Invienna and her trainer Greg Bennett at Royal Randwick
OPOSITE: Invienna (Mitchell Bell, pale blue, white sleeves) finishes a close second to Grand Proposal (Winona Costin, black ear muffs) in a TAB Highway Handicap at Royal Randwick

Shawn Cosgrove, 60, affectionately known as 'Cossie' can be regularly heard on Sky Racing Radio midweek mornings after 9am.

However, an even bigger audience would have heard his familiar voice when tuning in to former hit TV show *Price is Right* a few years back, when Cossie would bellow his trademark 'Come on down ... you're the next contestant on the *Price is Right!*'

"I started *Price is Right* when we were booked as a 10-week summer fill in. It was fantastic and the host Larry Emdur was the best bloke ever to work with – no ego, great fun. We all had a ball and it must have shown, as we lasted over 12 years!

"I only worked with Larry; it was great to do a fun show where it genuinely changed people's lives. Members of the audience would walk in struggling financially and could walk out with over \$200,000 of goods and money."

Cosgrove also has a burning passion for the racing industry, and is an enthusiastic part-owner of a couple of gallopers including the talented Invienna, a winner at Rosehill

Gardens last October.

Cossie adores his horses to the extent that he regularly makes head collars, reins and bridles by hand, not just for his own gallopers, but for others.

He created a head collar for Invienna in her pale blue and white colours, and also for Stakes-winning mare Two Blue.

"I have often interviewed Kristen [Buchanan-trainer] on the radio but had never met her. I thought she had done a big job with Two Blue so I made her a pale blue and pink head collar for Stradbroke day.

"I was stoked to learn that the mare won the 'best groomed horse' award on the day."

Cosgrove was raised just outside Toowoomba in the Darling Downs region of Queensland where the first of his 'many careers' commenced.

"I grew up on a mixed farm and as a kid I was always repairing bridles and gear, so later when my mate Mick Fox took out a licence to train in Victoria, I made a couple of bridles for him.

"I finished up buying a machine and making all his gear. It must have been OK because I was soon making bridles, head collars, breastplates, rings, leads

and so on for quite a few Cranbourne and Caulfield trainers.

"I never trusted leather as a lot of people back then didn't oil it correctly and it would break, so I went for the PVC-coated polyester that we see these days in all colours.

"Combined with brass or stainless steel buckles that didn't rust, it lasted for years. It was fantastic to see your horses go out looking great in gear you made yourself.

"But when my radio and TV work got busier I had to give it away.

"I ran into a mate recently and he's still using a bridle I made for him 20 years ago. It wouldn't have been a good business as my gear didn't wear out!

"I love the chance now to occasionally make something. I don't have a machine so it's all hand-stitched with English waxed thread.

"Last Easter I told Greg Bennett [Scone trainer] I'd make a couple of bridles for Invienna and Cool Baby, the two horses I have shares in with him.

"I think he thought I was mad but I sent him two that I made in their race colours and Invienna has already worn it at Randwick." ➤

Cosgrove started his media career as an office boy at Channel 10 in Toowoomba and within 18 months was already making waves.

"I was reading news, calling races and compering a school kid's quiz show. I also trained as a cameraman-coordinator; I had to do everything. I also called races for TV and radio in Toowoomba and the Downs.

"I left TV for 4GR Toowoomba and practiced voiceovers like crazy as I heard that you got paid for them in the City!

"When I got to Melbourne and 3UZ I started to make a nice dollar doing them. I did commercials for Fosters, XXXX beer, banks, milk, Holeproof, Sorbent and the famous Antz Pantz pantyhose ad!

"People thought I got truckloads of freebies ... not a cracker! I didn't have any use for pantyhose anyway," Cossie chuckled.

"The best was XXXX beer. I voiced an award-winning campaign for them and was asked to come to a big shindig.

"I smoked in those days and the dude from XXXX said 'Have you got a XXXX lighter?'

"I thought 'Here comes a gold-plated number for sure!' Wrong!

"He gave me a half-empty Bic lighter with XXXX stamped on the side and then asked me for my new full one as he no longer had his. They got me!

"I also remember doing toy ads and had a very big night out before them. My voice was husky and down near my shoes.

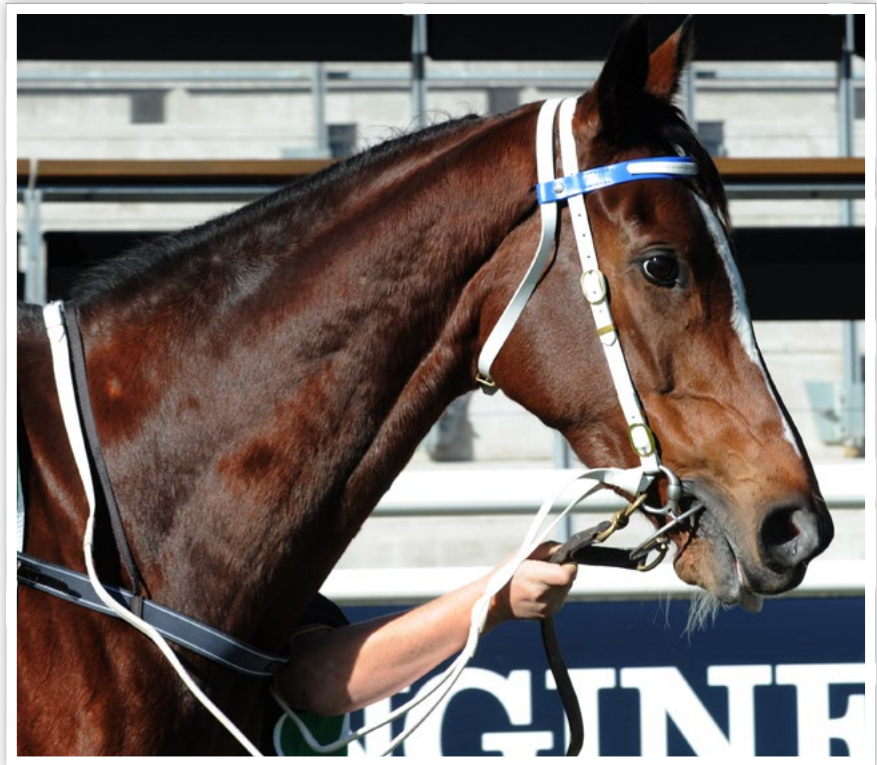
"The ads were for kid's trucks and the client loved the sound so much he wanted more recorded the next day.

"I had head back to the nightclub and got on the cigarettes again ... it was the only way I could reproduce the voice! I prayed he didn't want me back again, I may have died."

Cosgrove's first foray into horse racing was through his uncle, Con Doyle: "He was a good trainer; won four Stradbrokes and races along the east coast.

"Dad's brother was an amateur rider and Dad had raced horses and worked for Uncle Con at times. Racing was always there.

"We were great friends with trainer Pat Lee in Toowoomba who used to fight out the premiership every



Invienna sports the head collar, bridle and reins hand-made by Shawn Cosgrove

year with Jim Atkins.

"One day his apprentice shot through and he rang Dad to ask if I could ride some work for him during the school holidays.

"I was a farm kid who had ridden all my life. He threw me on a nondescript thing and asked me to hold it to a slow canter for two laps of his track. It pulled like a steam train.

"When I came back he was grinning like a Cheshire cat and said 'Beauty, worst puller in the joint.'

"I had a baptism of fire after that. I rode all the horses coming back after a spell.

"Pat Lee was an amazing bloke. He was a chronic asthmatic who chain-smoked but never did the drawback, or so he reckoned.

"Told me it was OK like that – I don't think the medical profession would agree."

Cosgrove entered horse ownership with his first horse called Good Old Days.

"He was by Old Crony, a first season sire that I took a liking to. I went to buy one of two of his yearlings and ended up with this colt for \$5,500 as he had a parrot mouth.

"I didn't think it had worried him much and it didn't afterwards. The horse won at Caulfield and another seven races at the provincials; he

ended up as a Riding for the Disabled horse as he had a lovely nature.

"The Old Crony filly I didn't bother with raced as Lady Violet and won three in town and became a good broodmare [producing Notoire who won four Stakes races including the Gr 1 Salinger on Victoria Derby Day].

"I later saw Good Old Days' mother in a sale and we bought her and bred Good Old Ted. He won a Blue Diamond Prelude, dead-headed in a Moir Stakes and was third in the Galaxy among other races."

Cosgrove remains a dynamo on the work front: "Apart from Sky Racing Radio, I have a funeral tribute business as well.

"About six years ago I lost five mates in five months – all ages, all reasons. I helped the families by producing tribute DVDs for the funerals.

"People must have liked them as I later got a call requesting I help a family that was at one of my mate's services. I did and then another call came, and another.

"Now I have a business that provides all printing services and DVDs for funerals.

"Retired jockey Peter Hutchinson, a great mate, works with me and we're flat out. It is the most satisfying work I have ever done, helping people through the toughest days of their life." **RNSW**