

RESTLESS

retires to his birthplace

HIGHLY CHARISMATIC STAKES WINNER AND MUCH-LOVED EVENTER, RESTLESS, HAS RETIRED AGED 20 – RIGHT BACK WHERE HE WAS BRED, BORN & PREPARED AS A \$150K EASTER YEARLING, AT YARRAMAN PARK

WORDS: BRONWYN FARR PICTURE: GEORGINA LOMAX PHOTOGRAPHY



Willa Mitchell aboard Restless during the State Championships

Restless was not a Group 1 winner and he didn't compete at the Olympics (although he did represent NSW) but the idiosyncratic and immensely genuine bay gelding had a profound effect on the lives of two young riders.

Restless (Thunder Gulch-Let's Hurry) was bred from the private broodmare band of highly respected horseman, Major James Mitchell, who died in 2011.

Major Mitchell, whose achievements included receiving the Hunter Valley Breeders Association Presidents Award for Services to the Industry, purchased iconic Yarraman Park from jockey George Moore in 1968.

Yarraman Park was established as a Thoroughbred stud over 100 years ago by the Thompson family with early champions foaled and raised on the property including the champion Eurythmic in 1916 and today the stunning 1200 hectare property is renowned for producing record-breaking yearlings and top racehorses with brothers Arthur and Harry Mitchell at the helm.

Restless completed his eventing career with Major Mitchell's 14-year-old granddaughter Willa on board, winning the NSW State Eventing Pre Novice Championships in Scone.

Talented Willa is the daughter of Georgina and Harry Mitchell and although she will continue competing on new horses, nothing will replace "the Choc man".

Georgie Mitchell said the horse affectionately known as Choc, named because of his rich dark bay colour by owner Victoria Farr when she was just nine years old, was enjoying retirement and an apparent romance with Willa's first pony.

"He was obviously seminal in her love for eventing over any other equestrian pursuit," she said.

"He was such a machine over cross country, which is absolutely the most important quality of any event horse – particularly from a mothers' point of view.

"He taught Willa an enormous amount and we will always be so grateful to Victoria for giving Willa the opportunity to go up the grades safely. He was always honest and in turn he kept Willa honest as well – if she switched off in show jumping she

would pay the price," Georgie said.

"It was wonderful to have the familial connection with Willa's grandfather having bred Choc and Harry preparing him as a yearling.

"Harry remembers him very well as a yearling who was always a lovely looking horse but certainly tricky to handle – still a favourite, then, as now.

"He is a horse that people remember – often simply for his quirky behaviour, the mounting yard leg up, the ability to have a complete fit over nothing and occasionally completely refusing to go on the float – it was always Choc's way or the highway and you just had to make it work," she aptly summarised.

"We are so lucky to have had Choc in our lives both competitively and now as a retiree."

Coached by Blair and Nikki Richardson at Vantage Hill for most of his 12-year eventing career, Restless is among 1450 Thoroughbred horses from a total of 3,175 horses registered for eventing at Pre Novice and above in Australia. With Victoria, he qualified at two-star level.

Mr Richardson, who breaks and pre-trains for clients including Yarraman, said Restless was "a gun horse, a super horse".

"He was a good racehorse and a good horse for these kids. He put a lot of trust in Vic and Willa and they were growing with him, horse and rider teaching each other, trusting them down drop jumps into water, brush fences where he couldn't see the landing. It's had to find a horse to compare with him," Mr Richardson said.

"He put in 150% every time, and kept trying. He was beautiful but quirky. What he did was give both

these girls Olympic dreams and Vic went on to Europe in eventing.

"It's not about just jumping a jump, it is about a partnership and trust. He had a good sense of self-preservation but he loved those girls and looked after the rider on his back," Mr Richardson said.

"Thoroughbreds are great for our sport, it is about endurance and Thoroughbreds will keep giving, even when they are tired.

"If I am looking for a horse to take to elite level, I look for a Thoroughbred. It is a bit of a fairy tale, he started at Yarraman and has done a full circle back to where he was branded."

Restless completed 48 race starts and 33 eventing starts. He won the NSW State Pre Novice Championships in 2009 with Victoria and again with Willa this year – no mean feat given his renowned contempt for the dressage phase.

Willa chose to retire Restless midway through cross country at Tamworth because he just "didn't feel right" and he has retired sound and in magnificent condition.

Raced by Gai Waterhouse and Yvonne Smith, the stakes-winner won 10 times before finding his way to Victoria (daughter of the author) at Scone. She took him to two-star level, campaigning him from 2009 to 2014.

"He is an incredible horse who has touched so many people, and I can't thank Willa, Georgie and Harry Mitchell for the care and love they have shown him and for always putting his best interests first – he will now live out his days happily in an incredible place, where he was born and bred," Victoria said.

"I am incredibly thankful to Gai Waterhouse for sending him to me when I was eight years old after his last start racing, because I cannot imagine how my life would be without this wonderful, quirky, beautiful horse.

"He has not only taught me so much and inspired me to do many of the things I have done in life, but he has inspired Willa in similar ways," she said.

"Enjoy your well-deserved retirement, young man, gallop around and keep everyone on their toes."

Restless, who won \$578,305 on the track, is out of multiple stakes winner Let's Hurry. **RNSW**