

'Weights' over for KODY'S RETIREMENT

TOP COUNTRY JOCKEY KODY NESTOR HAS GONE OUT A WINNER ON HOME SOIL, GUIDING NOEL'S GIFT TO VICTORY IN FRONT OF A CHEER SQUAD ON MELBOURNE CUP DAY WORDS: MARK BRASSEL

It was inevitable the day would come for Kody Nestor, 27, to hang up his saddle – but to boot home 574 winners before that day arrived is testament to his passion and dedication for the sport.

As a 19-year-old, Kody showed his talent when he partnered Modonna to an easy win at Royal Randwick on Australia Day in 2010, but therein lies the first clue to impending retirement.

A picture snapped by Mark Bradley shows the fresh-faced Kody standing head and shoulders above champion trainer, Gai Waterhouse.

"I've had to battle weight for most of my career and the body has finally raised the white flag," Nestor admitted.

"It all became too much and my body hasn't been handling it like it used to. I have always needed to diet, and head to the gym and the sauna and it was miserable towards the end."

Nestor has since applied for a NSW trainer's licence and said he's looking forward to the next chapter in his life.

"I reckon I've put on 10 kilos already!" he laughed. "I had most of my family and friends there supporting me for my final day riding so it was the perfect way to bow out by riding the last winner on the day."

"The horse (Noel's Gift) is no world beater but has been well-placed by Gayna (Williams-trainer)."

Nestor only rode Noel's Gift twice and finished with a 100% record on the gelding.

During his time in the saddle Nestor has ridden far and wide and when it was pointed out he had won races on 59 different racetracks, he replied: "Yep, I've been around a bit."

Topping the list is his home track



A proud Kody Nestor with the 'apple of his eye', daughter Olivia



That's all folks – Kody Nestor leaves the course for the last occasion

of Dubbo where he scored 71 wins, but Nestor has also won 20 races in the 'big smoke' at Royal Randwick (nine), Rosehill Gardens (seven) and Canterbury Park (four).

"I used to go every year to Birdsville (Qld) on a 12-day working holiday with Rodney Robb. The minimum weight is 56 kilos so I have always managed to scrape in weight wise.

"People have got to go and try Birdsville, it's like nothing else – it is an unbelievable experience in the middle of the desert with thousands of people flocking in.

"I have ridden for a couple of trainers on our trips up there and we'd go to places like Mount Isa and Betoota."

Nestor said he has ridden for some large stables such as Chris Waller, Gai Waterhouse and the Snowdens and has been legged aboard "some pretty good cattle".

"I won on Atomic Force and Ilovethiscity (both subsequent Group 1 winners) and I also won two races on Shiraz who is now a three-time Stakes winner.

"He was always going to be a very good horse. My uncle Peter trained him to win four of his first six starts



Kody Nestor sails past the post for the final time aboard Noel's Gift at Dubbo



Kody with his family and friends after his final race ride

but unselfishly recommended to the owners to send him to a city trainer."

His uncle also prepared Izababe, a top country cups horse: "I won eight races on him including the Wellington, Moree and Coonabarabran Cups.

"He didn't have a good constitution; if he had, I'm sure he would have been winning Stakes races."

Nestor said should he receive his trainer's licence he will base himself at Dubbo: "It's a really good area and easily connects to two or three different regions.

"Until then I'll keep riding trackwork for fitness and to earn a buck or two.

"I rode for legends like John Lundholm (senior), Guy Walter and my uncle and I'm lucky enough to have

picked up a number of tips from them.

"You talk about horsemen, old John Lundholm was a freak. In those days, they would start from scratch, not from yearling sales.

"Those fellas would go and pick up horses from 10,000-acre paddocks and bring them back to train.

"I'm best mates with his grandson Clint – he was a very good rider and now he's flying since taking up training.

"And my uncle Peter (with whom Kody combined to win 73 races) – I will be picking his brain as he has sold his property up here and is semi-retiring, heading to Sydney next year to live.

"I am really looking forward to forgetting about my weight and hopefully receiving my own licence and going for it as a trainer!" **RNSW**