



**Alyssa Mitchell**  
Blake Ryan stable



**Bradley Williams**  
Nathan Doyle stable



**Jeison Gamba**  
John Thompson stable



**Lauren Smyth**  
Peter Snowden stable



**Leonard Todd**  
Ciaron Maher stable

# FINALISTS

## IN SYDNEY'S STRAPPER AWARD

### TEN OUTSTANDING WORKERS IN THOROUGHBRED RACING HAVE BEEN NOMINATED FOR THE 2024/25 'SYDNEY STRAPPER OF THE YEAR' AWARD

**T**he final nominations for Racing NSW's 2024/25 Sydney Strapper of the Year award have been announced.

Now in its 16th year, this award endeavours to recognise the behind-the-scenes efforts by those strappers that tend to go beyond the call of duty.

The award is sponsored by Racing NSW and co-ordinated by Australian Racing Christian Chaplaincy.

The award is peer-nominated with strappers at Metropolitan race meetings being invited to nominate who they think deserves the award.

A selection panel of racing officials will subsequently choose the winner from the following short-list of finalists.

#### ALYSSA MITCHELL

**(Blake Ryan stable):**

Horses strapped Lady Extreme, Just Awesome. "Alyssa Mitchell has worked for the Blake Ryan stable for four years and has been our number one staff member since the day she arrived as she goes well above and beyond. She's the first one to arrive long before anyone else, and she's the last one to leave. Alyssa's always the one to fill in when staff are sick, to stay back for the vet, and to co-ordinate the horses' comings and goings. Her dedication and attention to detail is second-to-none, better than Blake's ever seen during his lifetime in the industry. Alyssa highly regards the animals' welfare and well-being which allows Blake to commit to other avenues of the business knowing the stable will be in excellent hands. As well as running the barn, she takes quite a lot of our horses to the races. Alyssa deserves this nomination due to her many, many tireless years in the industry."

#### BRADLEY WILLIAMS

**(Nathan Doyle):**

Private Harry, Dalaalaat, Woolloowin. "Although only employed by Doyle Racing for 12 months, Bradley has made a massive impact on the stable. Employed as a foreman, Bradley is

responsible for the co-ordinating of saddling and general running of trackwork of a stable of 42 horses. His knowledge of horses is second-to-none and coming from an equestrian background, his attention to detail is faultless. Bradley is extremely driven and will not hesitate to assist another staff member should it be required. As the regular strapper of Private Harry, Bradley has the massive responsibility of looking after the stables "leading light". Above all, Bradley is a friendly, much-loved member of staff who leads by example."

#### JEISON GAMBA

**(John Thompson):**

Gold Pattern, Welcome Gypsy, Impunity. "Jeison has been a valued member of the John Thompson Racing Team for the past 2½ years. Originally from Colombia, Jeison has embraced life in Sydney while pursuing his studies, all the while bringing his deep passion and talent for horse care to our stable. Jeison is a highly skilled horseman whose natural ability, calm demeanour and work ethic sets him apart. Whether he is working with young, nervous, or high-spirited horses, Jeison handles every situation with professionalism and

confidence. His dedication to the horses' wellbeing, both at the races and back at the stables, is nothing short of exceptional. Beyond his technical skill, Jeison is a team player whose positive attitude and reliability make him a cornerstone of our operation. His contribution to our stable goes far beyond daily responsibilities – he embodies the spirit, dedication and care that this award seeks to celebrate. We can think of no-one more deserving of this title and we are incredibly fortunate to have him as part of our team."

## LAUREN SMYTH

**(Peter Snowden):**

Huetor, King of Roseau, King of Sparta. "Lauren came to Australia from the UK in October 2018 on a working holiday visa and there was no doubt that we wanted Lauren to stay so we sponsored her. In all my years of working, I have not found a more dedicated horse woman. Lauren looks after Huetor who has been very badly injured twice in his racing career. He has had so much bad luck but is a treat to train. His injuries were such that Lauren had to administer treatment every three hours day and night for three weeks. Last year Huetor was badly injured and Lauren's nursing for six months of box rest has him back in work now and all healed. She was overwhelmed when Huetor won two Doomben Cups. Lauren travels our horses to Melbourne, Brisbane and Gold Coast during the carnivals, and we know that she will take the utmost care and attention of them always. Lauren is an absolute gem and a valued member of staff as she turns her horses out for raceday impeccably. In my training career, we have had two winners of the stablehand award (Michael Doolan and Lindy Wharekura) and Lauren is deserving of this award. It would be recognition of her hard work and dedication to be recognised by the industry."

## LEONARD TODD

**(Ciaran Maher):**

I Am Me, St Lawrence, Railway Man. "No doubt there's a small

hole in Lenny's heart after the retirement of I Am Me earlier this year. He started strapping her in 2022 when she ran at Scone and since then, strapped her in every one of her NSW starts. She was a mare who continued to improve as she matured and there's no doubt Lenny's care and dedication played a part in her success. Often, long after the rest of the stable had clocked off, you'd find Lenny giving her an extra massage with the massage gun or carefully grooming her to make sure she always looked immaculate – and she did! Although I Am Me gave him that sparkle in his eye, Lenny is much more than a one-horse man. Reliable and trustworthy, he's often sent on "one-man" missions, taking care of the driving, strapping and saddling when we have sole runners around NSW. He's the man we turn to when we need a senior hand at a trial or on raceday to get the job done, no fuss. Lenny takes pride in every CMR-trained horse and is the definition of a brilliant team player. No job is too big or too small and we're incredibly lucky to have had him in the stable for so many years."

## MADELINE SHALDERS

**(Joe Pride):**

In Flight, Sounds Of Heaven, Aberlour. "Maddi joined our stable nine months ago with strong industry experience, and in that short time she has become an integral part of our team. From day one, she's taken everything in her stride without hesitation – whether it's travelling horses interstate, floating them to trials, or taking them to the races, she approached every task with confidence, care and a can-do attitude. Maddi is a calm and capable horse handler who builds genuine connections with the horses in her care. Her attention to detail is second-to-none, and she takes real pride in making sure her horses are beautifully presented. Maddi treats every horse as an individual and it shows in the way they respond to her. Her work ethic is exceptional, and she brings reliability and quiet leadership to the team. She's the



**Madeline Shalders**  
Joe Pride stable



**Melwin Mandy**  
Richard & Will Freedman stable



**Michaela Shirvington**  
Tash Burleigh stable



**Robert Smith**  
Wayne Carroll stable



**Wendy Li**  
Chris Waller stable

## STRAPPER OF THE YEAR

kind of person you want beside you on a busy day – dependable, and always ready to lend a hand. We feel lucky to have her as part of the stable and are proud to nominate her for this award.”

### MELWIN MANDY

**(Richard & Will Freedman):**

Rolling Magic, Pocketing, Piraeus. “Melwin was as green as grass when he started; he hassled me (Will) for an opportunity to work with horses, even though he hadn’t before. He began trying to observe and spent many months doing jobs that are tedious and distanced from handling horses. Building confidence, he graduated to be one of the main horse handlers, showing great love and care for the horses and a keen eye for detail. He always asked to work more hours to understand more about the industry and be a vital part of the team. Through that desire he noticed how important all jobs are for the care of the horse. Throughout a two-year process he crafted his horsemanship skills and became a leader in the barn. He now runs his own barn and has developed the full respect of his peers through his tireless work ethic and the fact that there is no job too little, or unimportant for him to do, raises morale and sets an unbelievably high standard for the whole stable. Even though he could spend his time supervising staff, you’ll most likely see him with a pitchfork and bin, digging out boxes or scrubbing waters. Like all strappers, it’s not always the one that leads the horse into the mounting yard that should get the credit. You could not find a more deserving winner, if it happens to go his way. He represents the true essence of what a strapper should and can be; this industry is built off people like Melwin.”

### MICHAELA SHIRVINGTON

**(Tash Burleigh):**

Pokerjack, Iron Will, Mosgold, To The Nines. “It has been a pleasure having Michaela work for our stable. She started with us six years ago and has grown so much as a person. Michaela had never worked

in a racing stable and is a true horse lover, owning her own horses and it reflects with our horses and makes the wheels turn. She took to working with racehorses like she had done it before and her passion and love for the horses is so valuable. Michaela turns up early for work every day and never complains. We are truly lucky to have Michaela as a part of our small team as she is caring towards the horses, such as giving them extra scratches and treats, and helps new staff find their feet. Michaela is always polite and makes sure everything is in shape before she leaves at the end of every shift.”

### ROBERT SMITH

**(Wayne Carroll):**

Salute Again. “Robert Smith is our backstop and can run the stables in my absence. With over 30 years’ experience Rob does it all, this includes doing all the horses feeds both morning and night, cleaning the horse stalls with a thorough wash of the stables once a week, tacking on a horse’s shoe, educating of our staff and horses, ordering feed and hay, and unloading it into the shed. Robert is always first to offer to help and is always willing to be there when you need him. He is a phenomenal teacher of apprentices and racing is his life. Robert loves the horses, loves the industry and he loves the people in it.”

### WENDY LI

**(Chris Waller):**

Existential Bob, Atishu, Bright Red. “Wendy is the heart and soul of our stable and the definition of dedication. She’s one of the first to arrive in the morning and often the last to leave. Wendy joined us in 2022 with no horse experience and has been entrusted taking Group 1 horses to the races. Whether it’s a city Saturday or a quiet provincial midweek, Wendy is there strapping horses with pride, even on days off. She’s always impeccably presented and takes great pride in how she represents the team. Wendy’s positivity is infectious – she’s always smiling, full of energy, and lifts the spirits of everyone around her. Wendy routinely goes out of her way, often returning to work late in the evening to load horses travelling interstate, without a second thought. She steps up without hesitation when our Warwick Farm stable is short-staffed, even with little notice and travels there from her home base of Rosehill. She doesn’t just do her job, she lives it! Her tireless work ethic, can-do attitude, and genuine love for the horses and the team make her an absolute standout. She is more than deserving of Strapper of the Year.” **RNSW**

## HONOUR ROLL

| YEAR | WINNER          | STABLE                      |
|------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| 2024 | Ashish KUMAR    | Bjorn Baker                 |
| 2023 | Phylisha DOYLE  | Chris Waller                |
| 2022 | Ian SMITH       | Annabel Neasham             |
| 2021 | Clare HEUSTON   | Chris Waller                |
| 2020 | Graeme WILSON   | Kris Lees                   |
| 2019 | Alexandra MAHER | John O’Shea                 |
| 2018 | Lindy WHAREKURA | Peter & Paul Snowden        |
| 2017 | Riharna THOMSON | Keith Dryden/Scott Collings |
| 2016 | Iftikhar ALI    | Chris Waller                |
| 2015 | Vicki SZECSODI  | Bjorn Baker                 |
| 2014 | George TUCKER   | Chris Waller                |
| 2013 | Glenn BARNES    | Chris Waller                |
| 2012 | Skye SMALLEY    | Guy Walter                  |
| 2011 | Michael DOOLAN  | Peter Snowden               |