

*Thanks for the memories,*  
**WINX!**

**SHE CAPTURED OUR IMAGINATION. STOLE OUR HEARTS. RAN LIKE NO OTHER HORSE HAD EVER RUN BEFORE AND CREATED RECORDS THAT MAY NEVER BE BROKEN** WORDS: GREG PRICHARD



*The mighty Winx and Hugh Bowman in full flight as they capture the Longines Queen Elizabeth Stakes  
INSET: Hugh Bowman, Chris Waller and Winx take a final bow at Royal Randwick*

**L**ike all great champions, superstar Winx had to retire eventually, but we're always going to have the marvellous memories of Winx.

How we remember the mighty mare will be an individual thing.

It could be the incredible, 33-race winning streak, spanning four years. The four WS Cox Plates.

Her dominance at Randwick with a Doncaster Mile, an Epsom and three Queen Elizabeth Stakes among her victories at headquarters.

Maybe the world record number of Group Ones, 25, or the staggering amount of prizemoney won – \$26,451,175.

Her brilliant acceleration. Those astounding sectional times featuring stunning last 600s that left the opposition seemingly dawdling in her wake.

Or it could be those qualities we know she's got, but which we can't exactly measure.

Her amazing will to win. Sheer desire. Absolute love of the contest.

A seven-year-old horse that was still racing at her very best, right to the end? It must be some heart that beats inside of her.

That beautiful mid-autumn day in April when Winx farewelled us in front of a sell-out crowd of 43,833 at Royal Randwick will be something no-one who was there, watched it on TV or listened to it on the radio will ever forget.

The roar from the crowd as jockey Hugh Bowman drove her to the lead halfway down the straight sent chills up the spine.

It was yet another brilliant performance from the best horse on earth and an awesome experience for those who witnessed it.

This was what racing at its greatest is all about. Seeing a champion do its thing.

Winx's exit leaves the mantle of best horse in Australia up for grabs, but the great thing about this sport is that there will immediately be contenders.

The battle to be the next equine idol was in the early rounds of being fought even before Winx had retired. Now that the way is clear, it will begin in earnest.

*Winx's trainer, Chris Waller, is bound to have many more great horses under his care in the future, but whether any of them have the effect on him that Winx had remains to be seen.*

The journey he went on with the horse, who showed promise as a lightly-raced two-year-old, was good as an early three-year-old without dominating and then exploded late that season – never to be beaten again – was a very emotional one.

His deep attachment to Winx was there for all to see, particularly during the last few campaigns by which time her star had risen so high the debate had begun about whether she was, indeed, our greatest ever.

Waller's ambition, above all, was to make sure she remained fit and well, always came out of a race safe and that he didn't ask too much of her.

It was the same with Bowman and Winx's owners. They each ticked all of those boxes.

Winx was brilliantly managed. She was able to be so good for so long because she wasn't run into the ground.

And, of course, because she was so darn good. Her longevity, competing at the highest level, was the clearest indication of her greatness.

"It's pretty hard to keep them at that level for so long and it can only be done when the athlete is superior to the rest," Waller said.

"And that's simply what we've been working with. She's made us look pretty good and that's how good she really is.

"It's hard to quantify, but I would say 10 per cent better than her opposition, and Australia's a massive breeding country, we've got a great industry.

"So, to be 10 per cent better than your rivals over a four-year period, that's how this winning sequence has

been able to keep rolling.

"Wet tracks, firm tracks, short distances, long distances, off days, the best days, she's the same. So that 10 per cent was in our favour for a long time and made all of our decisions look pretty smart."

Waller wears his heart on his sleeve, to the great appreciation of racegoers.

He got more and more emotional with each of Winx's fabulous wins as her streak got longer and longer. Even talking about her at media conferences leading up to races, he would often choke up.

He considers it a privilege to have been Winx's trainer, the same as Bowman considers it a privilege to have been her regular rider.

He, of course, did a fabulous job handling such an enormous responsibility. Keeping her out of trouble in races and giving her the best chance to win.

"A horse like Winx, you're lucky to even see a horse like her," Bowman said. "But to be such an integral part of her career ... what a journey it's been. It's hard to believe it's the end, actually."

Waller and Bowman share a special bond.

It's a lot of pressure trying to keep a champion racehorse at the top of her game over a long period – and keep a phenomenal streak going at the same time.

Their sterling work – the work of the entire stable, including Winx's handlers Umut Odemislioglu and Candice Persijn – is something Winx's owners will forever appreciate.

"We can never really thank Chris and Hugh enough for what they've done," Peter Tighe said.

"They put their heart and soul into everything and they've got a great team behind them."

Debbie Kepitidis added: "It's hard enough to put into words what she's done, but what these guys, Chris and Hugh, leading a great team have done ... they are supreme professionals at the top of their game."

The same as Winx herself, right through to her final race.

Farewell, champ, you've given us all the thrill of a lifetime. **RNSW**