

Angel rises from an unexpected place

ABANDONED IN A DRY PADDOCK AT YASS WITH MORE THAN 50 OTHER HORSES, RAISE AN ANGEL FOUND HERSELF 350KM AND A WORLD AWAY FROM HER PREVIOUS HOME

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Jessica and Raise an Angel shining at the Aquis Champions Tour.
Credit: OzShotzPhotography



Sally Sweeney pilots Raise an Angel to victory at Moulamein races in 2015

Little grey mare Raise an Angel had spent her entire two-year racing career at Phil Sweeney's Jerilderie stables.

She was no star but always tried her best and was loved and cared for like a pet.

Both of Phil's jockey daughters Brooke and Sally Sweeney rode her in races and Sally even saluted on her at Moulamein. They doted on her until she was retired and sold.

Raise an Angel was set to be exported to race overseas but when the red tape became too much, her new international owner threw his hands up, walked away and stopped paying the agistment bills.

With mounting costs in drought conditions, the agistment property manager tried desperately to rehome the horses before Racing NSW stepped in and rescued them.

They were split between Racing NSW's facilities at Taree and Muswellbrook where they were able to rest, gain weight and get healthy again.

Raise an Angel, then five, went to Muswellbrook and eventually begun retraining for life after racing.

Meanwhile, in Sydney, passionate equestrienne and children's riding coach Jessica Bott, wife of Randwick trainer Adrian Bott, was looking for her next show jumping horse.

Having grown up riding off the track Thoroughbreds in the US, they remained her breed of choice.

She had heard from her friend Karen Day, Racing NSW's Equine Welfare General Manager, about the variety of Thoroughbreds available for rehoming through Racing NSW's programs so she made an appointment, hooked up the float and headed up the highway

to Muswellbrook.

"I didn't think I'd need the float but ended up coming home with not one but three horses," Jessica said.

"My close friends Bernie O'Regan and Emily Inwood made the trip up with me and also bought into the horses.

"Raise an Angel wasn't my first choice, but Bernie thought she had a lot of scope.

"She had a fluid movement and was brave over jumps and Bernie wouldn't let us leave without her!"

Once home, Jessica's plan to prepare Raise an Angel for show jumping hit a stumbling block.

The mare was hot and fizzy on the ground and fired-up on the lunge.

With the guidance of friends and more senior coaches, Jessica persisted and within a couple of months Raise an Angel was a different horse.

"I sat on her and she felt so different to how she looked," Jessica said.

"I took her trail riding and just enjoyed spending time with her. She was more like a therapy horse for me.

"My training of her was sporadic due to work commitments and supporting Adrian but she impressed me beyond her years."

Jessica started having lessons with Alison Rowland and Sarah McMillan.

Sarah's partner Nelson Smyth rode Raise an Angel when Jessica couldn't help with the retraining process.

With each session, the little grey mare showed more and more talent for show jumping.

They had their first outing together at Sydney Jump Club where they jumped clear.

One of Jessica's teenage students, Sophie Hatch, a top junior showjumper, then took Raise an Angel to Interschools where she performed well again.

Jessica continued competing on Raise an Angel, constantly impressed by the way she took each challenge in her stride.

"She is bold and brave and has a natural desire to jump a fence clean," Jessica said.

"She has never so much as thought about pulling up at a fence. As a breed, Thoroughbreds are intelligent and eager to please."

Earlier this month, Jessica and Raise an Angel faced their greatest test, the



Raise an Angel receives plenty of love from Jessica

Aquis Champions Tour on the Gold Coast.

In the Group 2 1.10m Thoroughbred Championship they finished in the top 10 – an outstanding achievement for any horse, let alone one who had been found neglected in a paddock just 18 months before.

"She is phenomenal," Jessica said. "It just goes to show it's worth taking a chance on a young horse and investing in quality coaching.

"It wasn't all sunshine and rainbows and she does still have her quirks, but we've turned a corner and I am so proud of her."

When researching Raise an Angel's breeding Jessica discovered the most astounding link to youth. Her grand sire, Fusaichi Pegasus, was by the

same sire as the life-changing gelding Jessica owned while studying at university in Kentucky.

"Ramsey was a star and I used the money from selling him to come to Australia," she said. "I have a lot to thank Fusaichi Pegasus for!"

For now, Raise an Angel is enjoying a well-earned spell at Evergreen Stud in the Hunter Region and will be stepping up to 1.15m at the Camden Winter Show Jumping Festival this month.

"I'm just aiming to be more competitive with her and enjoy the relationship we have," Jessica said.

"I trust her to get me from A to B safely and she's impressing me all the time. She really is something special."

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