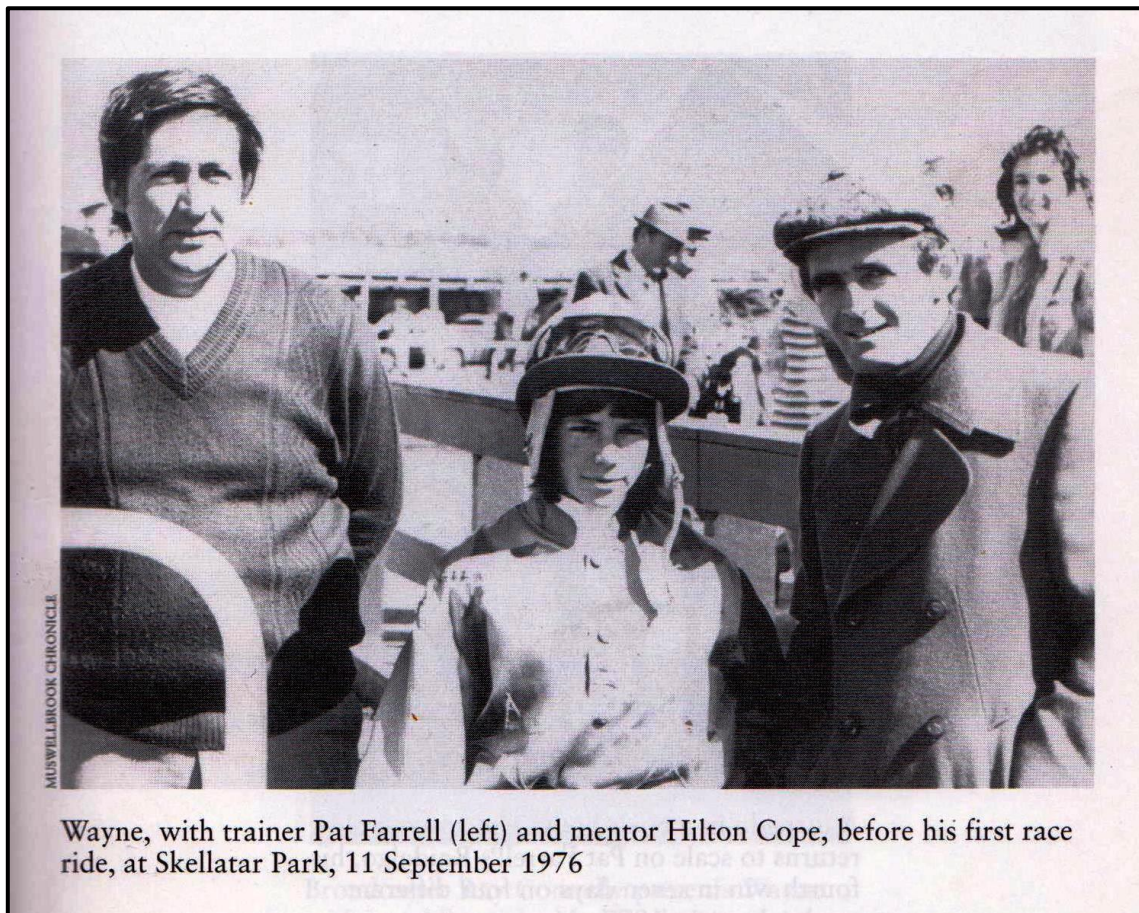


Wayne Harris

I decided to include an encomium to Wayne Harris in my 'Treasured Valley Vignettes' series. He might not be as 'notable' as some but may be remembered when others are long forgotten? Wayne was closely associated with at least two others in the cadre: A O Ellison and George Ryder for whom he rode many winners when trained by Pat Farrell.



Wayne rode 'Duke of Westpoint' for Mr and Mrs Peter Hodgson, Chamorel Park, Upper Rouchel. The same mount was to provide Wayne with this first winning ride in a race. He was regarded as a 'slow' conveyance with a swift pilot!



The youngest jockey to ride a Golden Slipper winner; WAYNE HARRIS on 1979 victor CENTURY MISS

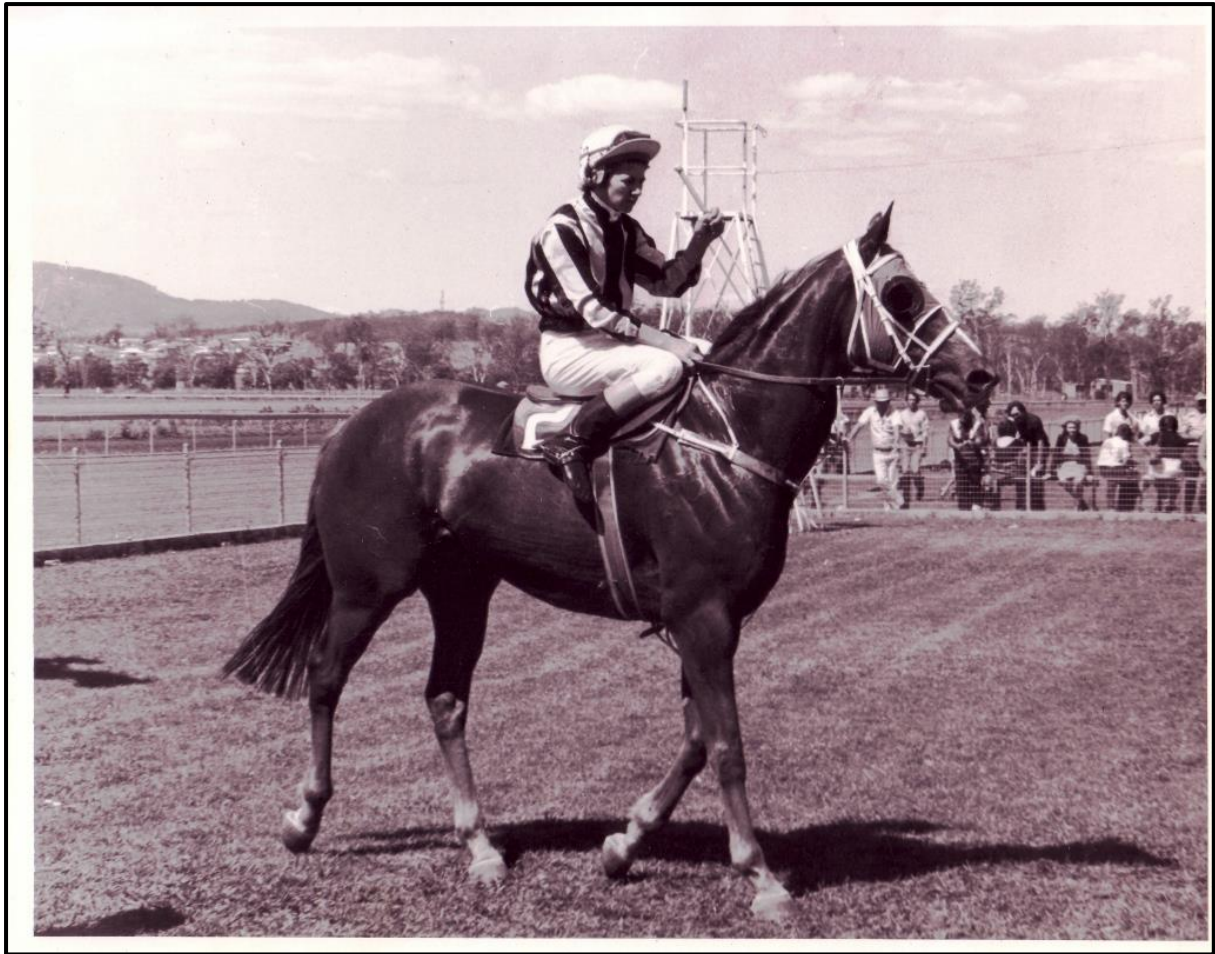
Harris was 18 (& 111 days) when he partnered with the Bart Cummings-trained filly in a barnstorming victory.



Photo courtesy of the Scone Advocate, May 1979

Bert Lillye was largely instrumental in persuading Bart Cummings to select Wayne Harris as the rider for Century Miss in the Golden Slipper 1979. Bert was a fixture at Scone Cup Meetings of this era and had closely followed the careers of both trainer Pat Farrell and apprentice Wayne Harris. Wayne had announced himself to the racing world not long before by riding five (5) winners at a meeting at Scone.

Here Bert is presenting the winning jockey's trophy to Kim Smith, the rider of 'Idol'; winner of the Bert Lillye Lightning Handicap at the Scone Cup Meeting May 16th 1979. Peter Meehan (Radio Station 2NM) is assisting. Trainer Steve Englebrecht is in the background with Idol's co-owner Mr F L Bragg of 'Rossgole', Aberdeen.



Wayne Harris returns to scale on 1980 Scone Cup Winner 'Hoedown' after a win at Muswellbrook

The featured image shows Wayne returning to scale after a win at Skellatar Park, Muswellbrook on 'Hoedown' for master Pat Farrell. Wayne also won a Scone Cup on 'Hoedown'. His mother was a co-owner.



1980 Scone Cup presentation: L to R Mr Ray Moir of the Carnation Milling Company (Sponsor); Wayne Harris, the winning jockey; Mrs Joyce Harris, Wayne's mother and co-owner of the winner; Mr Allan Poulton of the Carnation Milling Company



Mrs Joyce Harris with Mr Allan Poulton foreground; co-owners Jan Bowen, Janet Wadwell and Peter Meehan (Radio Station 2NM) behind

I think that's me totally obscured. Maybe the photographer had something in mind?



Milton Morris MP; Ron Auswild; Pat Farrell; Joyce Harris; Jan Bowen and Barbara Farrell



Milton Morris MP (microphone) in front of L to R Ron Auswild, Pat Farrell, Barbara Farrell, Janet Wadwell, Bill Howey, Peter Meehan, Unknown, David Bath



Wayne Harris shakes hands with Ron Auswald, the Chairman of the NSW TAB

Barbara Farrell, Joyce Harris, Jan Bowen and Janet Wadwell stand behind

Continuing my Melbourne Cup theme I wanted to feature another local legend. I unashamedly reproduce and recycle the attached from the now defunct Muswellbrook Shire Hall of Fame. I think Wayne Harris might have been the first and only inductee? At least Muswellbrook had one; we don't! Wayne never actually rode a winner for me. He did run second on a filly called Leith Walk. He was distraught at not winning. The reality was she wouldn't have run a place without Wayne's exquisite skill. Wayne was a great favourite of Bert Lillye who I featured earlier in my 'Blog'.

See also:

See also: <https://www.smh.com.au/sport/racing/melbourne-cupwinning-jockey-wayne-harris-i-just-get-moody-on-cup-day-20141029-11dg5r.html>

Melbourne Cup-winning jockey Wayne Harris: 'I just get moody on Cup day'

By Adam Pengilly

Updated November 2, 2014 — 4.25pm first published October 29, 2014 — 10.35am



Photo courtesy of 'Pinterest'



Wayne returns to scale on 'Jeune' after victory in the 1994 Melbourne Cup

Listen: <https://www.johntapp.racing/tappys-podcast/2018/8/28/episode-22-tappy-chats-with-wayne-harris>



After 11 spinal operations Wayne takes comfort in reliving the 1994 Melbourne Cup victory on 'Jeune'

Photo courtesy of Brisbane Courier Mail

The brain talks, but the legs don't like to listen. Almost as if daring them not to move, Wayne Harris gazes downwards to make sure they're going at the same time as the upper body. He has been down that road – many times before – when they don't.

It is the result of 11 operations – and counting – on his spine. His body is a "train wreck", in his own words. The forecast is not great either.

"I wish everyone in their life could have a day like that": Former jockey Wayne Harris rode Jeune to Melbourne Cup glory. *Credit: Robert Peet*

"And they think I'll end up in a wheelchair," he says. "My legs are very, very numb and weak now ... and they're not going to get any better."

The "train wreck", he thinks, is the result of many race falls. Unfortunately, those that could have made a difference have never really agreed. He has been down the compensation path, but was left "very, very disappointed".

"They say you can't prove they're from the falls, but I can't think how else they would have happened," he says.

Motivational speakers will often claim it is not about how many times you fall over, it is about how many times you keep getting up. At this time of year Harris can celebrate why he kept getting up.

The talented all-round sportsman, loathe to move to the city, had the world at his feet. As a kid he was a Golden Glove boxing champion, used to swim, ride bikes and dabble in rugby league.

He was told he was too small to keep up that last pursuit and decided on a career as a jockey instead, citing size and excellent balance as the main contributing factors. Three Sydney apprentice premierships later and no one dared argue with the decision.

"I had come from the country and had such a successful apprenticeship before everything went arse-end up," says Harris, citing numerous race falls and brain tumours.

At Melbourne Cup time, he always seemed to be injured or suspended. Luck was never on his side, but one time it was. Desperate for a ride in the 1994 race, Harris reckons he had been needling trainer David Hayes to throw him a bone for weeks.

It was Derby Day and Harris still did not have anything confirmed. Shane Dye had the pick of Hayes' horses in the two-miler and Harris slunk up to the barrier draw at the recommendation of Hayes on Saturday night to watch what might have been.

"I said, 'you better have a Melbourne Cup ride for me' and he said, 'come up to the barrier draw and see what happens'," Harris recalls.

"I'm sipping on the champagne and apparently Shane said, 'whatever draws the best I'll ride'. Coachwood drew eight and Jeune drew nine and he said, 'I'm riding Coachwood'.

"They said to David, 'who's riding Jeune?' He looked straight over and said, 'you better go ask that bloke there'. I felt like 10 foot tall."

So the bloke without a Melbourne Cup ride on Saturday night pores over the form. He reckons he has Jeune figured out; knows the rest of the field, the main dangers, their riders and colours.

Hayes tells him to stay away from trackwork in the couple of days leading up to the Cup. Jeune, to be kind, is quirky. He had been taught in Europe to miss the start, often stumbling out of the gates in Australia, which didn't suit the start-stop nature of racing down here.

Harris fronts Hayes and his owners and tells them his Melbourne Cup plan in the mounting yard before the race.

Harris recalls: "David just looked at me and said, 'you've got no hope of doing that. Have you seen this horse?' But it just felt like being on a Ferrari with no brakes [one he jumped]."

So instead of following the best horses in the race, Harris follows the best jockeys. Shadowing Jimmy Cassidy, who ironically is now in the small stable he looks after as a jockey manager, and Darren Beadman.

The gaps keep presenting for Jeune. Harris hits the lead a long way from home. Too far out for the clock tower enthusiasts, steadfast you can't press the button until reaching the famed Flemington landmark.

Harris describes the situation as a jockey's "nightmare". At least until you lead the field home in Australia's greatest race.

"It's just all your Christmases come at once," Harris says. "It's a life changer, in a lot of ways. As a jockey it's the ultimate. Some say, 'I don't care if I don't win a Melbourne Cup'. That's bullshit. Blokes like George Moore would have loved to have won a Melbourne Cup.

"To turn around and one day go past the Melbourne Cup in front you go, 'nah, this hasn't happened'.

"All these emotions just hit you. My father was probably one of my best supporters and no one else wanted me to go into the racing game. He said, 'follow your dream'. I thought of him and all the friends I'd lost. All the emotions just hit you. I wish everyone in their life could have a day like that."

Nowadays, Harris is still hobbling about 20 years since Jeune's historic win. And what he lacks in body he more than makes up for in the mind, quipping he hoped the mobility device he sometimes relies on could be tinkered with to go faster.

This year he has again been on the Melbourne Cup tour, visiting friends in Queensland he reckons he would maybe have never seen again if not promoting the race in between his regular media commitments with Sky Channel.

He jokes people would be entitled to think he has outlasted his time in the sun. But how can you begrudge someone doing their best when forced to retire due to ill health just two years after scaling Australian racing's Everest?

"It's great to catch up with people [through the Melbourne Cup] and it keeps me ticking over," he says. "What they're doing, it's just a marvellous thing.

"But I get very upset on Melbourne Cup day. I get a bit emotional and my use-by date probably went a lot further than what a lot of people thought; it's hard when you win a Melbourne Cup and you retire two years later.

"That's not because I wanted to, but it was because of ill health. I think, 'geez, I'd love to still be riding' and I just get moody on Melbourne Cup day. I'm really happy for whoever wins it, but quite often I go and watch the Melbourne Cup on my own and reminisce. You just wish you were a part of it again."

When he listens hard, people will tell him he always will be.

Muswellbrook Shire Hall of Fame

Wayne Francis Harris was born in Muswellbrook NSW on 17 December 1960.

He was educated at Muswellbrook South Public School and Muswellbrook High School. During that period of his life he was involved in a variety of sports, including junior rugby league, swimming, basketball, boxing, touch football and cycling.

Being small of stature he set his path on becoming a jockey. While still at high school he became an apprentice with Muswellbrook-based trainer Pat Farrell, riding track work at 'Skellatar Park' and in races throughout NSW. He later rode horses regularly for Ray Wallace in Newcastle and then for a variety of trainers throughout Australia and overseas.

Wayne's successes as a jockey were outstanding, record breaking and headline catching.

As an apprentice, he chalked up 558 wins – **an Australian record**.

In the 1980-1981 racing year he rode 183 winners which set **an Australian record for both apprentices and senior riders**.

In 1979 he put Muswellbrook on the Australian sporting map when he won the **Golden Slipper on Century Miss**, trained by the "Cups King" Bart Cummings. Wayne (or "Hairy" as he was affectionately known) became the first apprentice, and the youngest, to win the internationally recognised Golden Slipper.

Then on 1 November 1994, he achieved every jockey's ambition, he won the **Melbourne Cup on Jeune**, trained by David Hayes. Muswellbrook was in the national news again.

Wayne's successes in feature races are indeed impressive. Included in the list are:

Canterbury Guineas; Queen of the Turf Stakes; San Domenico Stakes; Epsom Handicap; Champagne Stakes and the Silver Slipper Stakes.

As a senior jockey, he had 41 feature race wins including two Magic Millions, Doomben Cup, SAJC Derby, AJC Sires Produce Stakes, Theo Marks Quality Handicap, VRC Newmarket Handicap, AJC Queen Elizabeth Stakes Caulfield Guineas etc as well as many on provincial tracks such as the Ipswich Cup, Newcastle Gold Cup and Newmarket Handicap and the Ramornie at Grafton.

Wayne also has success **internationally** in Ireland, Singapore and Hong Kong.

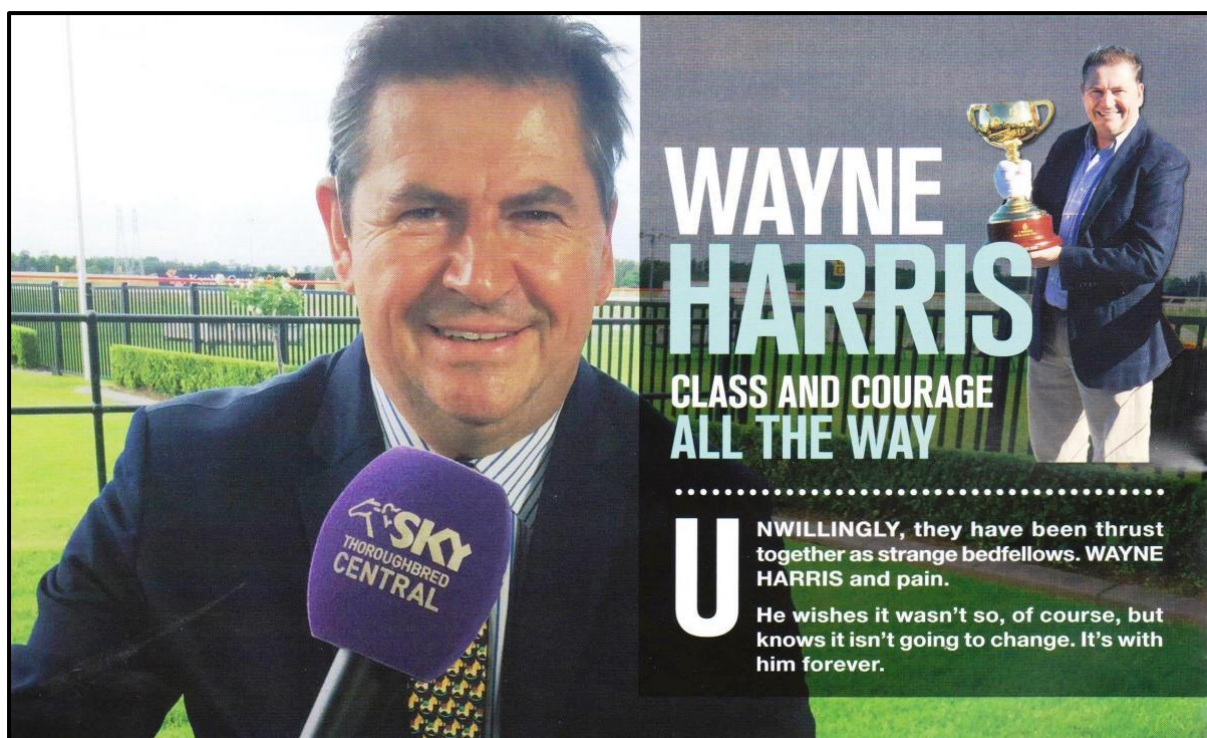
His first winner was the 'Duke of Westpoint' which won a race at Muswellbrook on Melbourne Cup Day, 2 November 1976. Wayne was 15 at the time.

The many successes during his career have been offset by **two serious illnesses** and numerous falls which resulted in many broken bones. At the age of 22 he was diagnosed with a **brain tumour**. After surgery he was advised that it was unlikely that he would ride again. By sheer determination and untold courage he made a brilliant comeback, only to be inflicted by **another tumour** years later. He also returned to riding after this second setback. Since his retirement, he has succeeded in a media career, being a broadcaster on both pay TV and radio.

Wayne was married to Linda, daughter of successful training, Neville Begg. They had two children, Matthew 17 and Aimee 15.

Wayne Harris, who put Muswellbrook on the sporting map, now manages a team of jockeys and works as a TV Racing commentator.

Inducted December 2007



Wayne Harris II

Featured Image & Text:

“Class and Courage All The Way”: Acknowledge ‘From the Track’; NH & CC Racing News Spring 2018

Prologue

See also: <https://sconeveltdynasty.com.au/wayne-harris/>

My initial ‘blog’ on Wayne Harris has been so popular I decided to add the following as well. I’ve totally purloined the cosmic content from the excellent Newcastle, Hunter and Central Coast Horse Racing News publication: ‘From the Track’; Spring 2018. At the time Wayne was riding as an apprentice I represented the Scone Race Club on this organisation. I feel justified in repeating it; otherwise it would not be publically available and ‘searchable’. Wayne is one of the truly inspirational people I have been privileged to meet in my (now) over 50 years in the thoroughbred industry in the Upper Hunter Valley.

Peter Snowdon is another along with Murray Bain, George Ryder, Stanley Wootton, Reg Moses, A O Ellison, Bert Lillye and Bim Thompson to name a few others. Wayne's career and example are cosmic. I'll leave it to the unnamed journalist to recount the stellar tale.

Dialogue

Unwillingly they have been thrust together as strange bedfellows, Wayne Harris and pain. He wishes it wasn't so of course but he knows it isn't going to change. It's with him forever.

The decades have passed since ill health forced the 57-year-old to prematurely pack up his saddle on a stellar Australian and International riding career which had netted scores of feature victories and more than 2000 winners.

He remains the youngest jockey to have won the world's richest juvenile race, the Golden Slipper Stakes, and has also won Australia's iconic race, the Melbourne Cup.

Regrettably he was robbed of the chance to add to those "big two" along with other major triumphs including a Queen Elizabeth Stakes, Canterbury Guineas, Epsom Handicap, Champagne Stakes (3), Silver Slipper Stakes (2), AJC Sires Produce Stakes (2), Apollo Stakes, Theo Marks Quality and Chelmsford Stakes in Sydney, Caulfield Stakes, Newmarket Handicap, Blue Diamond Stakes, William Reid Stakes, Turnbull Stakes, Craiglee Stakes and Orr Stakes in Melbourne, Doomben Cup, Queensland Oaks and Queensland Guineas in Brisbane, South Australian Derby in Adelaide, two Magic Millions Classics and a Hollindale Cup at the Gold Coast, Ipswich Cup and a Hong Kong Bowl, Singapore Gold Cup and Ireland's Ballylogan Stakes overseas.

That's not to mention the number of Newcastle plums (Gold Cup, Newmarket Handicap and now defunct Penfolds and Coca-Cola Classics), Hawkesbury Gold Cup and Grafton's Ramornie Handicap twice.

He also had the unusual distinction of winning both the Port Macquarie Cup and Caulfield Guineas on successive days in the spring of 1994.

"I was invited to Port Macquarie as a guest and Yorkey (trainer Gordon Yorke) persuaded me to ride Town Oak in the Cup," Harris recalled during a lengthy interview with FROM THE TRACK.

"He had won both the Taree and Wyong Cups and was a steering job. He won easily.

"But I had plane dramas getting back to Sydney and then on to Melbourne to win the Guineas the next day on St Covet. It was a strange 48 hours.

"Most likely I was the first jockey, and perhaps the only one, to also win both the Port Macquarie and Melbourne Cups in the same year," he chuckled.

Harris became the first Australian apprentice to ride five winners in a day on a metropolitan track (at Randwick on December 30, 1979) and chalked up a record 183 wins in 1980-81; all the more remarkable because there were not the same number of meetings then as now.

Make no mistake. An inaugural inductee last year to the Newcastle & Hunter Hall of Fame, he is one of the finest jockeys our country has produced.

Further greatness beckoned, but it wasn't to be. Only two months after his 37th birthday his career was over; much too soon.

Nowadays, as the face of Sky Racing's Thoroughbred Central channel at all Kembla meetings, he provides expert analysis of every race along with selections and post-race comments.

"They're like family to me at Kembla," he said. "I've been working with them for nearly 20 years; they have stuck solid."

But the cheerful countenance viewers see on their TV screens belies Harris' ongoing serious battle with his health.

Two brain tumours, meningitis, pneumonia and a staph infection floored him. But he beat them; Group I "victories" of an entirely different kind.

Some 11 spinal operations later, he walks with the aid of mobility devices. Pian is always by his side.

It's a far cry from those heady days at the top of the riding tree, but Harris is made of stern stuff and not a quitter. He has always been a fighter.

As far back as his younger days when the "Muswellbrook Whiz Kid" – as he was tagged when his racing career took off – was pretty deft in the boxing ring.

Born on December 17, 1960, Harris was the second of three sons to his parents Vince and Joyce; the eldest Gary being born in 1953 and the youngest Greg in 1966.

Coming from a family that loved sport, it was no surprise that Harris excelled at every sport he took on.

"It didn't matter whether it was rugby league, cricket, tennis, cycling, basketball, swimming or boxing, I went alright," Harris modestly said.

"Gary won two Hunter Valley Golden Gloves Boxing Championships, and I won my first on the same night he won his second.

"I lost only one fight on a close decision after I had been sick leading up to it. I didn't want to go out a loser, and won my next fight and that was it."

In spite of his small stature, Harris hadn't really entertained becoming a jockey. That all changed once he began going to his uncle Pat Power's property at nearby Wybong during school holidays.

"I was 12 or 13 at the time, and Uncle Pat trained a couple of horses as a hobby and I started helping him out.

"I quickly fell in love with the horses, and he introduced me to Pat Farrell, to whom I later became apprenticed at Muswellbrook when I was allowed to leave school when I was 15.

"I worked at Pat's stables before and after school. He was a pretty hard taskmaster, and took me along slowly.

"But I always had good balance and took to riding quickly."

Aside from Farrell's guidance, the budding young jockey had an excellent mentor in former champion jockey Hilton Cope.

After a dozen or so rides which included a couple of placings, Harris broke through with that often elusive first winner.

How could he ever forget the day? It was Melbourne Cup day 1976 (November 2) in a minor race at his own track's annual Cup meeting. Eighteen years later he was to reach racing's pinnacle by getting Jeune home in that first Tuesday in November at "fabulous Flemington".

"Duke of Westpoint was my first ride in a race and my first winner," Harris said. In fact, he was also my second winner.

"He was the one of the slowest things in the stable, but he was good to me. He was the outsider of Pat's horses both times."

[Note: 'Duke of Westpoint' was bred and owned by Peter and Robyn Hodgson of 'Chamorel Park Stud', Upper Rouchel near Aberdeen. Peter was the 'driver' behind the formation of the Hunter Valley Blood Horse Breeders Association. See HTBA and 'Bold Scone Venture' on this website blog.]

See: <https://sconevetdynasty.com.au/bold-scone-venture/>

Harris' climb to the top as an apprentice was such that, whilst based in the country, he won three successive Sydney junior riding premierships between 1979 and 1981.

He rode a record breaking 558 winners as an apprentice, highlighted by his unforgettable 1979 Golden Slipper triumph at Rosehill on Bart Cummings' filly Century Miss.

"I had been doing a fair bit of riding for Bart at the time," Harris recalled.

"Peter Cook had won on Century Miss a week earlier in a lead-up race (Magic Night Quality), but already had a Slipper commitment.

"The late great Sydney racing journalist Bert Lillye kicked up very strongly with Bart to get me the ride.

"He said to him: 'You put Wayne on every day of the week; why don't you put him on in the Slipper?'"

Cummings eventually agreed and Harris, at 18 years of age, became the first apprentice to win the Golden Slipper and is still the youngest rider to have won the prestigious two-year-old classic.

But it was close. The photo-finish camera had to be called on for only the second time then since the race's inception in 1957 – and it showed Harris' mount had edged out South Australian Dawn Command by a head.

Harris was placed in the next two Golden Slippers; third on Baglaga Miss (1980) for Colin Hayes and runner-up on Food For Love (1981) for Pat Farrell.

Later as a senior rider, he was again placed twice; second on Paris Opera in 1989 and third on Big Dreams in 1991.

Harris outtrode his claim in Sydney early on and had to compete on level terms with the likes of Cook, Malcolm Johnston, Ron Quinton, Mick Dittman, Darren Beadman, John Marshall and John Duggan.

“They changed the rules after Malcolm won both the apprentice and senior titles (107.5 winners) in 1975,” Harris said. “Apprentices weren’t able to keep claiming 1.5kg right up to becoming senior riders.”

Harris can look back and smile at such wonderful memories, but at the same time ponders which option he should have taken. Stay in the country as he was “convinced” to do and enjoy a casual lifestyle though with monotonous travelling and wasting, or seize an opportunity to transfer to Sydney earlier and join any of the leading stables such as T J Smith. Cummings, master of apprentices Theo Green and Neville Begg.

The latter option would have resulted in him being put constantly on the big stage with arguably an easier workload and reaping even greater rewards.

Harris’ 1994 Melbourne Cup triumph on Jeune came “out of the blue” of sorts, although he had been having some success for the import’s trainer David Hayes.

“I had won both the AJC Sires Produce Stakes at Randwick and Caulfield Guineas (both Group 1s) on St. Covet for David, and kept asking him about a Melbourne Cup ride,” he said.

“He told me in the jockeys’ room at Flemington on Derby day to come up to the barrier draw after the races and see what might happen.

“Shane Dye rode Jeune when runner-up in the Mackinnon Stakes that day and had the pick of the Hayes’ Cup runners. He chose Coachwood (who finished 18th) when he drew just inside Jeune, and I got the mount.

“It was a case of being in the right place at the right time. Jeune was a funny horse, and I felt the best thing to do was follow the best jockeys (Beadman and Jimmy Cassidy) in the race.

“When Jeune burst to the front in the straight and was home, it was an unbelievable feeling.

“It’s a life changer for sure for a jockey because it can open plenty of doors. It’s bullshit if you don’t think winning a Melbourne Cup is a big deal.”

Winning the cup is special in its own right – but for Harris it carried so much extra significance.

He had come back from his first brain tumour and numerous falls, and had not long celebrated his 22nd birthday when that was first diagnosed.

When Harris eventually made the move to Sydney, he was based at Randwick and kicked off 1982 by winning the Carrington Stakes there on New Year’s Day on talented Rosehill sprinter Ubetido.

The year, however, had had its ups and downs and didn’t end well. A Randwick fall in February sidelined him for a few weeks with a tailbone fracture. He was back for the autumn carnival and picked up a fluke ride on bolter Mighty Manitou, and won the Sires Produce Stakes on him for trainer John Hawkes.

There were also gaps in his riding that year from suspensions and illness, all of them combining to frustrate him trying to keep his weight at an acceptable level.

He won the Silver Slipper Stakes on Been There at Rosehill in October for a second successive year, after scoring on Vaindarra in 1981, but health problems were surfacing. There were occasions when he was too ill to fulfil his bookings after arriving at the track.

It all came to a head in December when, after suffering headaches and nausea, he knew something was seriously wrong.

When he was suspended that month for the seventh time that year, his doctor recommended undergoing tests. The prognosis wasn't good; Harris underwent a seven hour operation to remove a brain tumour in Sydney in mid-January, 1983.

Nine long months later, armed with a medical clearance and fully convincing stewards he was fit to ride again, he was given the "green light" to resume.

"I recuperated with Ray and Fay Wallace at their home near Broadmeadow racecourse," Harris said. "They were absolutely wonderful; like second parents to me. Ray was a fantastic mate; none better.

"And Max Lees, who lived two doors away, was a tremendous support as well. I will never forget their encouragement and help to get me riding again."

Harris' comeback at a midweek meeting at Gosford on Thursday, September 29 couldn't have been better scripted. He had rides in the last two races and won them both; on Court Regent for Wallace and Silver Road for Lees.

A few days later, Harris went to Sydney and won the Widden Stakes at Warwick Farm on Lees' promising youngster Rivage, on whom he was to also win the Penfolds Classic at Broadmeadow the following autumn.

The winners kept flowing. "I had a remarkable run; I rode 15 winners from my first 18 mounts back," he said.

"The doctors told me that it was long odds that I would get a recurrence of the brain tumour and if it did happen, it wouldn't be within the next five years.

"When I won the Ramornie at Grafton in 1996 on Cangronde, I wasn't feeling 100 per cent.

"Not long after that, further tests confirmed the tumour had returned. It was a million to one chance and I had to have another operation."

Thankfully, it was benign, though Harris had no time to celebrate. "I got very sick and was diagnosed with meningitis.

"It nearly killed me; I was placed on life support."

He pulled through, but the meningitis returned and he contracted pneumonia and a staph infection. After a fortnight in intensive care and four months in hospital, he came out the right side. His fighting spirit had won him another "race"!

Deep down though, he knew his days in the saddle were numbered and there two things he especially wanted to do – to make another comeback and go out a winner and also ride a winner in West Australia.

“I had ridden winners in every State except WA,” he explained. “I went there at Christmas time in 1997 and won at Ascot (a Group 3 race) on Boxing Day on a horse called Jacks Or Better.”

Barely six weeks later, Harris admitted the body had endured enough – and his doctor told him to quit.

“It was midweek and he told me to stop riding immediately, but I had taken two rides at Rosehill on the Saturday and made up my mind to go there and finish on a winning note.”

The Muswellbrook Whiz Kid was true to his word. On February 15, 1998 he ran second on Space Prince and a few races later he won on Quick and Handsome for Canberra trainer Pater Staunton, then pulled up the stumps.

In a moment of reflection, he offers; “What a rollercoaster life and career it’s been; the highets of highs and the lowest of lows that I’m sure no one will ever know about.”

As well as his Sky work at Kembla Grange, he also pushes himself hard to manage three jockeys (Chris O’Brien, Travis Wolfgram and apprentice Robbie Dolan); something he learnt from his brother Greg, who at one stage looked after jockeys such as thrice Melbourne Cup winner Glen Boss and now retired local larrikin Alan Robinson.

The sad irony though is that, in spite of his many triumphs on the track, his hue health battles off it won him admiration and sympathy – but precious little else!

Harris is entitled to feel let down by the powers that be, having to fend for himself amidst continuing medical bills as a result of arachnoiditis (a painful spinal condition), hospital visits and ongoing medication. His injuries and subsequent poor health surely don’t arise from anything other than his race falls!

Typically, the courage and determination which has characterised his life has, somehow, ensured he maintains a positive attitude. “I know there are people worse than me, and I have to keep going,” he says.

“The alternative is not real good.”

Newcastle and Hunter Racing Hall of Fame 2017

See: <https://www.newcastlehunterhof.com.au/2017-newcastle-and-hunter-hall-of-fame-inductees-announced/>

Jockeys:

Any jockey who has been licensed by a principal club in Australia and domiciled in the Region and;

- Made an outstanding contribution to racing in the Region or within the Australian Thoroughbred Industry
- Consistently achieved results at the highest level, or in jockeys' premierships
- Excelled in race riding and promoting the Industry
- **Candidates may be either active or retired jockeys**

WAYNE HARRIS (Inducted 2017 with Robert Thompson)

Jockey – Muswellbrook

31 Group 1 wins both in Australia and overseas including: 1979 Golden Slipper Stakes, Century Miss; Champagne Stakes, True Version (1985), Select Prince (1989); 1990 Blue Diamond Stakes, Mahaasin; 1994 Caulfield Guineas, St Covet; 1994 Melbourne Cup, Jeune; 1995 VRC Newmarket, All Our Mob.

First apprentice to win the Golden Slipper

558 winners as an apprentice – a record which still stands