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One in a Million - CHALANI CATLOW

At the 2008 Barastoc Horse of the Year Show, CHALANI CATLOW, at the age of 24 with an eleven year old Peter Robinson riding, beat a quality field to win the Working Australian Stock Horse Mare Class to cap off a show career spanning 20 years that included winning the same class at the 1991 Barastoc Show.

It would be virtually unheard of for any horse, particularly a mare, to have successfully competed for such a long period of time at the highest level.

Catlow, born 2nd September 1983 and bred by Peter and Jeanette Gower is by RANNOCK and out of one of their most successful broodmares, the legendary CHALANI CAT BALLOU. Peter and Jeanette purchased a bay yearling colt, MARKITA DOWNS MARKSMAN from Ian and Beth McLachlan. The agreement was made that McLachlans would receive Catlow as part of the payment for the colt.

On arriving at the McLachlan's Markita Downs ASH Stud, she looked more like a Riding Pony than an Australian Stock Horse. Barry Sawyer, who managed McLachlan's Murray Grey and ASH Studs, decided, due to her small stature, the best option would be to send her to Michelle Banks to complete the breaking-in process that the Gowers had commenced. On her return, she was turned out for the winter to mature and hopefully grow!

That Spring, now standing 14.1.5hh Barry commenced educating her and soon realised that the little chestnut pocket rocket possessed more ability than her tiny stature would have you believe. She was taken to a classification day as a four year old. She passed but one of the three classifiers commented to Barry that he didn't think she would be as successful as some of his previous horses.

A few weeks later at the East Gippsland Branch Show, she won the Novice Working. Not one person in attendance that day would be aware that they were witnessing the commencement of a 20 year career with wins in all kinds of ASH events. She went on to win many Championships: Led, Ridden and Working at the highest levels of competition including Barastoc Led Mare of the Year in 1991 and Barastoc Ridden Horse in 1989. She was the inaugural winner of the prestigious Alistair Irving Memorial Working ASH at Melbourne Royal Show.

In 1991, Barry left the McLachlan's employment and Catlow was sold to Bronwyn Anderson. Bronwyn bred two foals from her, both colts by her stallion INTREPID COMMANDER. The first foal died at two days old and her second, KYLES QUIET ACHIEVER, has gone on to have a successful career.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, Bronwyn was forced to sell some horses including Catlow. Unable to find a buyer at West Gippsland Branch Meeting, she agreed to give the mare away to Sheryl Grills who was a palomino breeder. Sheryl and some close friends, Ken and Kym Robinson, were talking one evening and, after hearing that Ken and Kym would love to have Catlow to breed ASH foals, both Sheryl and Bronwyn agreed to give Catlow to them.

The mare arrived in the middle of winter in 1999 and fair to say she did not look like the show horse she had been. In good

condition, she had a long woolly coat and saggy belly. It was Kym Robinson who fell in love with Catlow, she spending more time with her than the other members of the family. She was particularly taken with her kind and beautiful nature.

They decided they should ride her in order to lead the other horses around and have another horse on the property. They tell an amusing tale of the first day they rode her. Lesley Pater came up to help in case she bucked Ken off. Kym led Ken around the yard nervously waiting for her to buck or take off or something. But nothing happened. She was perfect.

Easy to ride, a pleasure to do anything with, Ken wanted to do a bit of campdrafting so they got Catlow fit to see if she would do the job. First time out at Bairnsdale Campdraft she was placed 3rd in the Novice, much to the family's delight.

From there one thing led to another and she began her show career once again. Lots of ribbons, many Championships and even a placing at the Melbourne Royal Show with Ken on board.



The Late Barry Sawyer and CHALANI CATLOW



Above: The left photograph is of the Late Mr Barry Sawyer riding CHALANI CATLOW and the right photograph is of Peter Robinson riding CHALANI CATLOW almost 20 years after the left photograph was taken.



Delwyn Moss Photography

Young Stuart Robinson, then eleven years old, was getting bigger and needed another mount. Ken put him on one day and created a three year long partnership. Catlow taught Stuart everything she knew and in return for his awkward riding he spent all his pocket money outfitting her with the best of everything. He eventually got better and went on to win many championships at many events and was the High Point Junior of the West Gippsland Branch in 2006. He also won his Junior Event on her at the 2007 Barastoc Horse of the Year.

Stuart got another horse from Bronwyn Anderson, amusingly, this one was bred by Barry Sawyer, so with some persuasion from Kym and Ken, Catlow was handed over to Peter Robinson, aged eleven. With Equine Influenza his first show on her was Barastoc and Peter's laid back attitude had Kym concerned prior to the event. Ken saddling Catlow up at the time, smiled and patted Catlow on the neck and said, "Look after him old girl".

Catlow did what she does best, she looked after Peter and nailed the Working, winning 20 years after she first won the same event.

It is a privilege to have Catlow as part of the Robinson family. She has brought much fun, tears of joy, kept the family safe and introduced us to many friends. She is much loved, as no doubt she was to Barry Sawyer and Ian and Beth McLachlan.

To have such a successful show career is a tribute to her breeding, temperament, soundness, ability and education. As a family, the Robinsons are aware that they will never get another Catlow, but she has given them a benchmark to work to. She will live the rest of her days under their loving care.

Catlow - One in a Million. 🐾

Below Left: Peter Robinson and Catlow
Below Right: Esther Robinson and Catlow having fun in the sun in the family dam



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