

## **HISTORY OF JOCKEYS FROM SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

As well as producing champion horses such as Tobin Bronze, Comic Court, Rain Lover, Pago Pago, Dulcify and Light Fingers, South Australia has also witnessed some of the sport's finest ever jockeys ply their trade.

### **Pat Glennon**

Although raised not far from Melbourne's Flemington Racecourse, Glennon moved to South Australia after riding his first winner at the age of just 13 and became one of Adelaide's leading apprentices. Linking with Bart Cummings' father Jim, Glennon rode Comic Court to victory in the 1950 Melbourne Cup, before winning another Cup in 1959 aboard Macdougall.

Glennon settled in Ireland later in his career, riding for the Vincent O'Brien stable and winning the jockeys' championship. After accepting a contract to ride in France he was introduced to racing immortal Sea-Bird. Glennon won the Epsom Derby on him, when he was famously described as sitting as "still as a statue" turning for home, and later the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe.

### **William Pyers**

"Billy" Pyers enjoyed a remarkable start to his career and by the time he had turned 24 he had won the Adelaide Jockeys Premiership seven times. He would go on to win another two premierships, in 1959-60 and 1960-61.

He piloted many feature race victories around Australia, perhaps none more memorable than riding Tulloch in his only appearance in Adelaide in the SJ Pullman Select Stakes (even though Pyers later said that champion US three-year-old Dahlia was the greatest horse he ever rode).

In 1964 Pyers, who was widely known for being a superb judge of pace, accepted an offer to ride in France and while plying his trade abroad, his successes included winning the King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Stakes twice; as well as the French Derby, Irish Oaks, Ascot Gold Cup, Doncaster Gold Cup and the 1967 Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe.

### **Jim Johnson**

One of only a handful of jockeys to have ridden three or more Melbourne Cup winners (Gatum Gatum and twice on Rain Lover), Johnson is remembered for his unorthodox riding style, which saw him virtually stand up. His pure strength saw him regarded as one of the strongest whip riders of his time.

In a career spanning more than 30 years, Johnson won four Adelaide Jockeys Premierships yet it wasn't until he picked up the ride of Gatum Gatum in the Melbourne Cup and guided him to victory that the eastern states took notice.

After moving to Melbourne, success came quickly and in the 1966-67 season he won the Melbourne Jockeys Premiership. As well as enjoying success on Rain Lover, he also had a great association with Tobin Bronze, on whom he won two Cox Plates and a Caulfield Cup.

### **John Letts**

Johnny Letts began his career in the saddle as an apprentice in 1959 and went on to boot home well over 2000 winners, winning eight Adelaide Jockeys Premierships before retiring in 1988.

Letts made his mark in Adelaide, winning a swag of feature races including the 1968 Adelaide Cup on Rain Lover, yet it wasn't until his first Melbourne Cup win on Pipping Lane in 1972 that the wider racing community became aware of his talent. In 1980 he picked up his second Cup victory on Beldale Ball.

After a fall in 1974, Letts learned he had a broken spine and his career looked to be over. Restricted to a neck brace, he was standing in the betting ring one day when a punter knocked him over and inadvertently corrected his neck, allowing him to ride for another 14 years!

### **Des Coleman**

Globetrotting hoop Des Coleman started riding at 14 and spent 44 years in the saddle in a career that saw him win three jockey premierships in Singapore as well as enjoy successful stints in Turkey, Malaysia, England and Ireland.

He is still the only jockey to have won three Perak Derbies, a feature race in Malaysia, while on Australian soil he won the Adelaide Cup three times and the Goodwood Handicap twice.

### **John Stocker**

John Stocker is famed as a two-time Caulfield Cup winner, yet neither were run-of-the-mill victories. In 1964 he piloted the Ron Dini-trained Yangtze to victory at the age of just 17, becoming the third-youngest jockey to ever win the Caulfield Cup.

In his second Caulfield Cup victory on How Now in 1976 he produced the ride for which he is widely remembered, navigating from a wide alley to land the prize for trainer Colin Hayes, the trainer he served his apprenticeship under and went on to build a formidable combination with through the 1960s and '70s.

Stocker also rode legendary sprinter Manikato, Tobin Bronze and Maybe Mahal in a career that saw him enjoy success in South Africa, Singapore, Malaysia and New Zealand.

### **Bob Cox**

A punters' favourite, Cox rode five winners at a meeting on three occasions throughout his career, which began in 1939 and spanned 34 years.

In winning nearly 1500 races, he collected every major race on the South Australian calendar (many numerous times) with the exception being an elusive Adelaide Cup.

Cox began his career in Melbourne as an apprentice and after spending time in Tasmania, in 1942 he packed his bags for Adelaide to ride for trainer A.J. McCawley. Interestingly, two weeks later a two-year long racing ban was imposed because of WWII.

In the 1966-67 racing season Cox amassed 90 winners in the metropolitan area – an amazing record that still stands today. The list of champions he rode in his career includes Tobin Bronze, Light Fingers, Caliente and Rain Lover.

*This article is brought to you by Tom Waterhouse; Australia's biggest bookmaker and the Managing Director of online betting website tomwaterhouse.com. Tom is a fourth generation bookmaker, and with 112 years of betting knowledge in his blood it was only natural for him to follow in the footsteps of his racing lineage.*