

# Sport



## Bulls charge into Aussie test side

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ISSN 1321-5353



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# BOOK SALUTES FALLEN JOCKEYS



LEGEND: The Desiree Gill memorial at the Gympie Turf Club.

Photo:Troy Jegers

## Gympie riders among those profiled in study on racing deaths

**HORSE RACING:** A new book which features eight jockeys from the Gympie region is shining the light on a side of racing not often explored.

*Their Last Ride – the Fallen Jockeys of Australia* provides a compelling insight and story on every Australian jockey who has lost their life riding a racehorse.

Gympie's Desiree Gill, Lucas Bird, James Edwards, Daryl Mills, Reginal Russell Minter, Patrick Nevin and Gunalda's William Kew and Frederick Knudsen are among the 938 Australian jockeys.

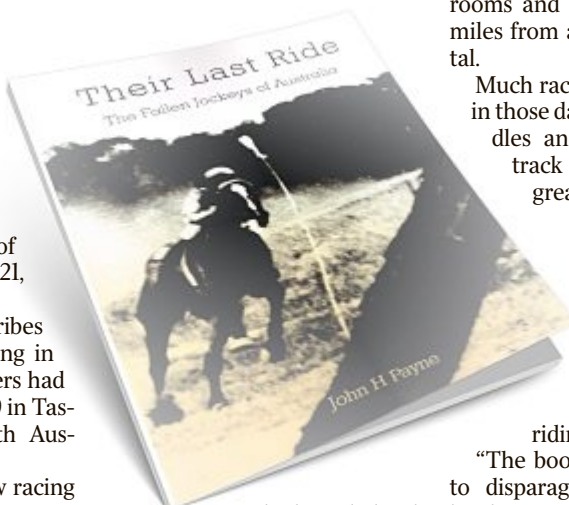
Author John Payne said the book was not intended "to reflect grief or sorrow on the part of those who have given their lives to riding racehorses but rather reflect on them as individuals and to honour them for their ultimate sacrifice each has made".

"I found it hard to write about so many deaths but when I thought about it, you are not writing about people's lives not their deaths," Payne said.

"The average age of the jockeys was about 21, 22 years old."

*Their Last Ride* describes the early days of racing in Australia when 35 riders had died by the end of 1879 in Tasmania, Victoria, South Australia and NSW.

Payne recounts how racing in this period, and for some years later, was conducted by virtually anybody – hotels, bookmaker groups, charities benefiting hospitals, ambulance brigades, or local communities, with rough tracks



laid out behind hotels and/or on private land.

There was no outside fencing, normally nil or few inside running rails, no ambulance or medical staff, no casualty

rooms and often, races were miles from any sort of hospital.

Much racing was also done in those days over solid hurdles and steeplechases, with track surfaces varying greatly in quality.

With little supervision, children as young as 11 or 12 were riding in races, with younger children engaged in riding trackwork.

"The book is not intended to disparage the thoroughbred racing industry. Like many sports whether it be motor racing, cycling, motor cycling, every pursuit has its associated risks," Payne said.

Payne said vast numbers of jockey deaths continued until

the mid-1920s, when racing generally came under the regulations of major racing clubs, such as the Australian Jockey Club in NSW and the Victoria

the number of jockeys being killed and/or seriously injured.

However, despite all of the adjustments, nearly 950 jockeys have lost their lives in rac-

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JOHN PAYNE

Racing Club in Victoria.

They were given charge of approving courses for racing, licensing participants, improving safety, and empowering stewards.

That included enforcing the wearing of skull caps, which resulted in a rapid decline in

ing-related incidents.

After eight years of painstaking research, Payne has completed his record of those lost lives, in memory of them.

The book is available online at [www.theirlastride.com.au](http://www.theirlastride.com.au).