



PAUL

RICHARDS

@richowp

Richo catches up with author John Payne to discuss his new book *Their Last Ride*.

PR: John, well done on *Their Last Ride*, which tells the stories of all the riders who have lost their lives in falls from racehorses. What gave you the idea?

JP: I was actually researching another project, on the Sydney Cup, and I'd come across a lot of jockeys who'd died. I was at Caulfield one day, had a look at the National Jockeys Trust memorial and noticed that I had around 300 more names than they did. They also had 40 that I didn't have. I thought, "I might keep researching this."

How many jockeys have you found who've lost their lives while riding?

Well, I had 650 after that day at Caulfield and I've ended up finding 938 — thankfully none since the book was published. Hopefully it stays that way.

How long did it take you?

About six years from when I first started researching it.

How did you find them?

I went through a lot of newspapers on the website trove.com.au and they kept popping up. Then I wanted to double-check the names I found so I went through funeral records and any other documentation I could find.

How come your figure is so different to the NJT's tally?

Back in the late 19th century race meetings were held everywhere. They were conducted by publicans, hospitals, charities — all sorts of organisations, not just racing clubs. Sadly, a lot of them were conducted on tracks that weren't safe and a lot of the riders weren't as experienced. The deaths still popped up in the papers though. I've also included riders who have lost their lives at trackwork or later in from injuries sustained in a career-ending fall.

We will remember them

I found myself getting quite emotional reading some of the stories. How did you go, researching so much death?

I had a lot of trouble with it early on. Especially when every story ends in death. However, I wanted to make sure I gave some details of the jockey's career rather than just the date of the fall. I approached some relatives of those that had passed away and I was overwhelmed with how helpful they were. Then it occurred to me that I was actually writing a book to commemorate these lives.

A lot seemed to happen in jumps races.

Early on, the hurdle and steeple races were quite dangerous. The horses weren't as well educated and the jumps were more testing than these days. They used to leap things like logs and brick walls that were nowhere near as forgiving if the horse made a mistake.

There was one fence at Caulfield that seemed to cause a few problems.

The great Tommy Corrigan had his brilliant jumping career ended at Caulfield in 1894. In 1905, Mick Mooney lost his life at the same fence near the winning post. Then in 1926, Wal Hibberd died there, as did Patrick Clohesy in 1927.

I notice there was more tragedy to the Wal Hibberd story.

Yes. He died on Caulfield Cup day, leaving his wife Queenie to look after their three children. She remarried to Les Ellis, but sadly he died after falling in a Mentone steeplechase in 1929.

It is stunning and sad how many kids you uncovered as being killed while riding a racehorse. How young did you find them?

The youngest was George Green. He was just nine. His dad wasn't in the best of

health and some people convinced George to go and work for a trainer in Glenelg in 1883. He was riding a horse when it got caught in some wire and threw him off. His dad didn't even know he was working at the stable. When he found out about the injury he rushed to the stable and found his unconscious son. The doctor advised against moving him but his dad took him home. Sadly he passed away the next morning.

That is terrible. And the youngest in a race?

Isaac Marshall was four days short of his 11th birthday when he fell off a pony in a race on his uncle's property. He'd won a race the previous day.

And the oldest?

Lance James was the oldest I found. He was 62 when he died after a trackwork fall at Canterbury in 1963. He'd retired from race riding 10 years earlier after winning over 1000 races in a 45-year career.

John Logue was one of the more unfortunate.

He was just heading to the start of the race when a horse called Boy Jim, ridden by Les Bushell, crashed into him at Rutherford racecourse in New South Wales in 1904. Bushell was found to be not only unlicensed to ride in a race, but drunk. Logue was knocked unconscious in the tumble and never came to. To make matters worse, apparently he had two silk handkerchiefs stolen from his clothing while he was lying on the ground.

The story of the Jenkins brothers was another sad one.

In 1892, Reece Jenkins was leaving the Lake Coorong races (400km from Melbourne) on a horse. He headed off across the track but didn't realise there was a consolation race being run. His brother John was leading the four-horse

field and crashed into Reece, who hadn't seen him coming. Reece died instantly, John the next day. And it got worse. Another brother, Mick, died in a steeple fall at Sandown Park the following year.

The Melbourne Cup hasn't been immune from tragedy.

Fortunately it's only happened once from a fall in the race, back in 1881. John Dodd was riding Suwarrow. As they came to the home turn Wheatear, who was up near the lead, tripped over a stray dog and fell. Suwarrow was travelling hard against the fence and with nowhere to go he stumbled. Dodd's leg got trapped between the rail and a post. His leg was badly fractured and he was taken to Melbourne Hospital. Sadly, he lost so much blood he lost his life the following Monday.

We've lost a few Cup-winning jockeys as well.

Six in all, I believe. Joe Morrison (1866, Warrior), Horry Dawes (Patron, 1894), Tommy Clayton (Acrasia, 1904, and Poseidon, 1906), Hughie Cairns (Spearflet, 1926), Keith Voitre (Marabou, 1935) and Neville Selwood (1951, Delta). Morrison was a victim of the medical standards of his time. He broke his leg riding Chester in 1878 Cup and it wasn't set properly. Still in pain in 1889, he had another operation and died on the table.

Hughie Cairns is the face of the fallen jockeys.

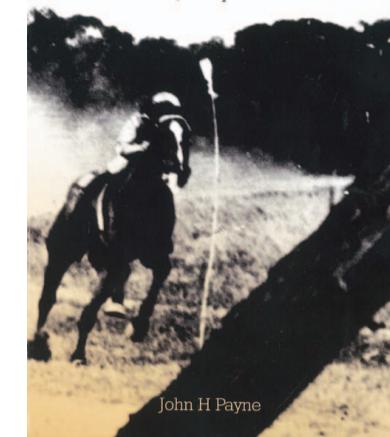
Yes, he's the jockey on the NJT statue at Caulfield. He won the 1926 Cup, but by 1929 he was riding over the jumps as well. He was on Quick Deal when it made a mistake at the last hurdle at Moonee Valley in July 1929. The horse rolled over the top of him and he died soon after.

Keith Voitre was another who was taken too soon.

He was only 25 when his mount Pilot

Their Last Ride

The Fallen Jockeys of Australia



John H Payne

crashed 600 metres from the Moonee Valley winning post in September 1938. Three others went over the top of him. Voitre suffered fractures to his skull and died in St Vincent's Hospital that night.

The last Melbourne Cup winner we've lost is Neville Selwood.

Selwood is probably the most successful Australian jockey to have died in a fall. He died in France in 1962, a year after winning the English Derby.

WIN A COPY

Courtesy of John Payne we have a copy of *Their Last Ride* to give away. To be in the draw just email prichards@winningpost.com.au with the name of the Melbourne Cup-winning jockey who died in France in 1962, or mail your entry to:

Winning Post book competition

400 Epsom Road

Flemington 3031

Entries close on Friday November 16, with the winner announced in our November 24 edition.

If you're not lucky enough to win, you can order a copy at www.theirlastride.com.au (rrp \$49.95 plus postage).

Guidelines: Contact details (with phone number) must be included, even if not for publication. An e-mail address is not sufficient. Shorter letters (under 200 words) carrying genuine, verifiable names have more chance of getting a run.

YOUR SAY

LETTERS TO WINNING POST



A champion, not an icon

Every decade or so we see great horses, and the inevitable comparison with the great red horse of the Depression era comes up. You can set your watch to it. At the moment it's Winx deservedly in the spotlight. Five years ago it was Black Caviar, five before that Makype Diva, 30 or so before that Kingston Town.

In one recent article, the author claimed, "Winx could do anything better than Phar Lap or Kingston Town did or Tulloch for that matter."

I don't agree. There are three grades of quality thoroughbreds; that is the great arena of the Sport of Kings. There are good horses, there are champions and there are icons. Don't confuse the three, particularly the last two.

The difference between a champion and a good horse? One or two lengths. The difference between a champion and an icon? My conservative estimate is 10-12 lengths, probably more. I will now attempt to set the record straight.

Consider a four-year-old gelding who wins a 3200-metre staying race at Randwick, then comes down to the Valley and wins his first W.S. Cox Plate as if it was an exercise gallop. A week later the horse steps out and wins the Mackinnon over 2000 metres, then three days after that, treats 62.5kg like it was a postage stamp in a Melbourne Cup. No horse has won with more weight since. (Many said he would have won with 65kg.)

Two days later, he steps out and wins a 1600-metre weight-for-age race, blowing away a top field of sprinter/milers, and then three days later wins at weight-for-age again, this time over 2400 metres. And he does it all in second gear with the ears pricked.

This has never been attempted again, let alone matched, in the last 88 years. The great Tulloch tried something similar 30 years later and couldn't even

get close. So, as you can see, Phar Lap was an icon, Tulloch was a champion.

Or how about Carbine? This is a horse who wins a Melbourne Cup with 66kg on his back (the highest weight of all time) in track-record time, against the biggest field ever assembled (39), by a good margin (2½ lengths) and giving the runner-up a mind-boggling 24kg.

The best horse I have seen in my lifetime, Kingston Town, couldn't win it with 7kg less. Also, Carbine gave Highborn 20kg more than Kingston Town gave Gurners Lane, and remember, Kingston Town didn't beat Gurners Lane.

If all that wasn't enough, Carbine wins weight-for-age races over different distances on the same day on three separate occasions. So once again, one was an icon, one was a champion.

Now let's have a look at Winx's spring record. Over the past four years, she wins the Epsom Handicap or Main Stakes in Sydney. Then comes to Melbourne, wins either the Caulfield or Turnbull Stakes before her Cox Plate triumphs. She doesn't race again for the remainder of the spring. Not quite the same thing as Phar Lap and Carbine did.

It gets better from here. Winx has not won a race with more than 57kg on her back, which is not really a "grandstand". Phar Lap and Carbine set weight-carrying records which have never been broken in the past century. As well as their Melbourne Cup victories, Phar Lap won a Futurity stakes with 65kg and Carbine a Sydney Cup with 61.5kg. Bit of a difference!

Winx has not won a race beyond 2200 metres. At her one and only attempt at 2400 metres she failed. That was in the 2015 AJC Oaks and she has never raced over the classic distance since. Phar Lap won two Derbies and two St Legers over the slightly longer journey. Carbine won a Sydney Cup as a three-year-old burdened with 57kg. Tulloch won seven classic races and a Caulfield Cup as a three-year-old. So once again, not really the same thing.

Furthermore, Winx has still yet to prove herself in the biggest arena of all. The world stage! There are some excellent books on the market which highlight

Phar Lap's mighty performance at Tijuana in 1932, which he produced under the most punitive of circumstances imaginable.

So we know Winx's Cox Plate wins were outstanding but why didn't connections opt to take on the world's best instead? She had already equalled Kingston Town's record the year before and had nothing more to prove in Australia. A great way to cap off her career would have been to contest a race like the Arc de Triomphe or Dubai World Cup. Win, lose or draw, this would have been better than winning a fourth Cox Plate, beating good, but not outstanding, opposition. And the truth is, history judges thoroughbreds on who they beat.

Another interesting point in the recent article was the statement: "Winx's sheer longevity, soundness and astounding and sustained speed over the closing 600m of middle distance races suggest only bad luck could get her beaten at her pet distance."

Longevity and soundness depend on many factors. The first is the obvious one: weight.

As already stated, Winx has not been carrying a lot. Put 68kg on her back and send her around in a two-mile race, as Phar Lap was, and let's see what her next start or campaign is like. A weight like this would have broken a lesser horse. The mighty Bernborough for example, carried this same weight in a Caulfield Cup but then broke down in the Mackinnon Stakes a fortnight later. Three months after being burdened with this impost, Phar Lap was winning a world-class race on the other side of the planet in track-record time.

Another factor that affects longevity is the quality of the opposition. Phar Lap was thrashing Hall of Fame horses like Chatham, Amounis and Nighthawk. Carbine beat stars such as Highborn, Abercorn and Melos.

Keep taking on these horses week in, week out, and see how your longevity is.

There's another couple of facts to take into account when considering their relative Cox Plate efforts. In Phar Lap's day, the Cox Plate was not what it is today. Phar Lap used it merely as a lead-up race to the Melbourne Cup, which was his grand final, instead of

running in the Caulfield Cup, where a penalty would have been incurred if he had won it.

He already had a formidable 62.5kg to contend with in the Melbourne Cup and certainly didn't want any more. It could be argued therefore, that Phar Lap was not 100-percent race fit when he contested it. Yet he still wins it under a stranglehold giving the runners up 6kg and 10kg in his two wins.

In his 1931 Plate success, Phar Lap beat Chatham, a horse who went on to win the Cox Plate in 1932 and 1934 among his 21 stakes successes. His others included a Doncaster Handicap with 65kg, two Epsoms, three Linlithgow stakes, two All Aged and a Caulfield Stakes. Winx did not beat a horse of this calibre and didn't give the runners-up weight.

From this, I am of the opinion that Phar Lap at his worst would have been better than Winx at her best and would beat her easily in any weight-for-age race, Cox Plate included, if he was alive today.

I dislike playing devil's advocate with such a great mare but when you are comparing modern-day champions to a horse who had to have the weight-for-age scale changed to stop him, I become a very hard marker. Winx is a wonderful mare and probably two or three lengths better than any other champion of the past 30 years. But that is all she is, a champion.

I have always said that the Australian book of turf icons is the shortest book in the world.

Page one, Carbine. Page two, Phar Lap. There is no page three.

Terry
via email

Top drawer

On October 27 the TAB said somebody had \$6000 on Yucatan at \$5 to win the Melbourne Cup, after which the horse was into \$4.50.

When I was betting if somebody had \$6000 on the favourite to win the Melbourne Cup with me 10 days away, I would put the \$6000 in the top drawer, leave it at \$5 and forget about it till I got home Cup night!

Pittsburgh Phil
Coogee Bay (NSW)