



Greyhound 'fanatic' after another champ

**By
DAVID BRASCH**

HE describes himself as “the most fanatical greyhound man ever” and that just about sums up Val Ignatenko.

Val and his wife Gay run a couple of businesses at Hervey Bay where they also rear a small team of greyhounds. They have several handy gallopers, including the extra smart Barnacle Bob, in work with the Attard boys Martin and Renald. Their dream is for a greyhound of the year ... another one! That’s right, Val and Gay have been there, done that, racing the former champion stayer Flat Flyer (Temlee-Try Personality) who earned greyhound of the year honours in Victoria back in 1982.

The Attards attest to the Ignatenko rearing methods being among the best, and Val leaves no stone unturned in his bid for another superstar. Val has been making things happen since he arrived in Australia with his family when four years old, back in 1949, fleeing the communist rule of Russia soon after the second

world war.

“My father falsified papers to escape Russia with our family,” said Val.

Val grew up in Bendigo where his neighbours had greyhounds, so he was touched with the racing bug from an early age. “I went to Melbourne for work, but also played football with a guy called Herb Siakew,” said Val. “Herb trained the great dog Gerard The Gent and he also trained my first dog.”

Val’s first winner was ironically called Moscow Chief and Val admits while the dog had ability, he also had the ability to fight.

By the late 70s he had linked up with trainer John Kelly ... the start of the Flat Flyer story. “We already had a heap of dogs, and another one was the last thing we needed,” said Val. Ignatenko was out at Kelly’s property when he first spotted Flat Flyer as a 12 month old pup. “I had seen an advertisement for a few from the litter for sale in a local paper,” he said. “They wanted \$1500 for the pups which was a lot of money in those days.



*Val Ignatenko with a couple of
Just The Best pups.*

“But as soon as I saw him, I knew he was a champion. I was positive I was right. He was by Temlee from a Benjamin John bitch which was the great cross at the time. “And he was hyperactive ... he just wouldn’t stand still.” Val went home and Gay agreed they should buy the dog “even though we had a yard full of dogs already”. As Flat Flyer, and with Kelly putting the polish on him, the Temlee pup turned into a super

stayer breaking the Olympic Park track record and winning a number of big races and taking the greyhound of the year title. By 1987, Val and Gay were looking for a move. "I had been working far too hard in the business I was in and the company wanted more and more all the time," he said. "It was a high pressure job."

Val and Gay had never been to Queensland but came north on a holiday on the recommendation of Gay's sister, and within a weekend at Hervey Bay had decided they wanted to move there.

"We arrived in November 1987 and have been here since."

With a small business started, and eventually another on the way, the Ignatenkos set about establishing themselves. Dogs had to take a back seat.

"We were working seven days a week for years to get the businesses going, but three or four years ago we eased out and let staff run them," said Val.

And with the extra time of their hands, greyhounds emerged in their lives once again.

"I had sold all my dogs in

Victoria, Flat Flyer came to Queensland to stand at stud but died soon after getting here," said Val.

When he started buying dogs again four years ago, Val trained them himself and raced at Bundaberg with a bit of success.

"But four years ago I decided to build some yards on our property and start rearing my own dogs," he said. "My methods are all based on those John Kelly used back in the 70s and I have proven they work with the numbers of winners we have got."

Val pointed out the success rate for most dogs bred is only 20 percent of greyhounds win two races or more.

"Our success rate is 80 percent, so we must be doing something right," he said.

Val bought pups from former Bundaberg star Call Me Katie and Albion Park 30.27 winner Ultimate Meg was one of the first he reared.

Barnacle Bob, Deep Katie and Deep Blaze are from another Call Me Katie litter.

Val headed to Ipswich for the

auction late last year and came home with pups by Just The Best, Solve The Puzzle and Southern Champ and has high hopes for them.

He also has two Just The Best pups about to be educated out of Nan's Princess a Sydney winner. He has linked up with the Attard boys after reading their story in The Journal two years ago that said they were "looking for owners". "I was looking for a trainer and we fitted the bill perfectly," said Val.

"I didn't know them from a bar of soap but they are great fellas and good trainers. "We get on well."

Living at Hervey Bay stops Val and Gay attending race meetings often, but the couple never misses one of their runners on Sky.

"And we do like to head to Brisbane on business to coincide with our dogs racing," said Val.

That's going to happen much more in the next few years as Val's young stock comes through ... young stock that might include a second greyhound of the year.