

Sally takes Vince Curry in the last stride



LEFT: Maree Zammit was all smiles after Runaway Sally won the Vince Curry. **RIGHT:** Owner Graham Phillips and Runaway Sally ... 'before this win the biggest success we've had was a Fifth Grade at Albion Park on a Monday night.

By DAVID BRASCH

IF Jason Phillips had not listened to a hunch he had a couple of years ago, his dad Graham may never have won this year's Vince Curry Memorial Maiden at Ipswich.

Jason had the loan of a broodbitch called Sally Honcho as payment for a debt.

He put the bitch in pup to Token Prince and anxiously awaited the birth of the litter.

"Jason had a hunch something was not right with the bitch a little time before she was due to have the pups," said Graham. "He took the bitch off to Larry Jocumsen who discovered there was a dead pup inside her and immediately performed a caesarean to deliver the bitch's litter of two dogs and three bitches.

"It was fluky that Jason had that hunch that proved to be correct."

Fluky because one of those bitches was bought by Graham and racing as Runaway Sally, she

emulated her sire by going through the Vince Curry series unbeaten.

Now trained by Tony Zammit, Runaway Sally came from six lengths behind the tearaway leader Highbury Raider to win in a photo, with Swift Creek in third.



Graham Phillips has been in greyhound racing for 20 years.

"I got started after helping a mate who had greyhounds," he told The Journal. "I bought a dog from him and won a few races at Beenleigh and Toowoomba."

But work commitments forced Graham to have a break soon after.

"I leased a few out, had some trained and even bred Serious Moments who I sold at eight months," said Graham.

“I’m sorry I sold her,” he said of one of the state’s best broodbitches of recent years. Jason, now 29, also got into greyhound racing for a brief stint a few years ago, training a few winners but concentrating on building his knowledge of greyhound pedigrees worldwide. He couldn’t help but be impressed with the bloodlines of Sally Honcho who is out of the famed Wee Sal and had already produced some smart gallopers like Zia Barbara.

Malawi’s Prince	Malawi
Token Prince	Duchess Marina
True Temptation	Amerigo Man
RUNAWAY SALLY	Bay Road Queen
Head Honcho	Walkabout Sid
Sally Honcho	Fitzroy Lass
Wee Sal	Chariot Supreme
	I’m Blessed

When Jason organised the breeding deal with Sally Honcho, he tried four or five different top sires but couldn’t get in. A second try to get into Token Prince was successful.

“Jason sold one of the bitches at eight months to the guy who owns Boomeroo,” said Graham.

“He is not even going to race the bitch, but will put her to Boomeroo when she comes on season.”

The two dogs and two bitches left were broken in at Springwood with good reports.

Prince Honcho was sold to a client of the Tony Zammit kennel and Jason had three.

“I wanted to get a pup from the litter from Jason but he wouldn’t sell me one,” said Graham. “But eventually I talked him into selling me one of the black bitches for \$2000 and half of her first litter.”

That bitch is Runaway Sally.

The three pups broke in well, Rare Roman running 16.83, Jukebox Jessie 16.96 and Runaway Sally 17.20 at Springwood.

“But we knew my bitch had sore chest muscles

at the time and would improve on that,” said Graham.

It was at that breaking-in that Jason and Graham started looking for a trainer for the pups ... a search in vain.

“We tried about a dozen trainers, most of the top ones and even some interstate without any luck,” said Graham. “We wanted the dogs to finish their education and be pretrained but most of the trainers wanted them ready to race.”

That’s where Tony Zammit came in.

He was happy to take them and do the education and pre-training. He’s ended up with his second Vince Curry Series winner (his first was Reliability).

“Tony got them at 14 months, about seven months ago and Runaway Sally was the slowest of the three and probably still is,” said Graham.

“Jason and Tony have high hopes for Rare Roman.

“Tony thinks he will be good enough to be a stud dog eventually.”

A slight injury in early trials set Rare Roman back, missing the Vince Curry, leaving it to his litter sister to win.

Graham admits Jason is “wrapped, but also not happy” that he bred but sold the Vince Curry winner. “He gets half the first litter when she goes to stud, so that is making him happy,” said Graham.

“It’s a huge thrill to win a race like this. The first winner I trained, at Beenleigh, was a huge thrill as well.

“Before this win, the biggest success we’ve had was a Fifth Grade at Albion Park on a Monday night.”

Graham tells an amazing story of the ability of Sally Honcho as a broodbitch. “She stayed with her pups until they were 12 months old, and controlled their weight through the whole time,” he said. “She kept them in near perfect racing condition, sometimes not allowing one or two of the pups to eat for a day or two.

“It was an amazing thing to see.”

She’s also produced a Group 2 winner of the Vince Curry Memorial.