

Iron dog could fly

Peter Rayner has been in greyhound racing for 30 years. He is known Australia-wide for the deeds of the great sprinter Faithful Hawk. But long before that speedster was pushing Rayner into the national spotlight, a dog called Iron Hawk did just that. Journal Editor DAVID BRASCH looks at the career of Iron Hawk.

FROM the moment Peter Rayner set eyes on Iron Hawk he fell in love with the big fawn dog. Rayner was living at Stafford in Brisbane at the time and was a great friend of NSW trainer Jack Pringle. "I often went to the Gabba and helped out with the dogs when they came north to race," said Rayner. "I'm still great friends with Jack today."

Rayner remembers well the day he headed to the Gabba to help Jack's brother Alan with a team of dogs. "I forgot my license and asked the then chief steward Bill Brittain if I could handle the dogs without it.

"He said no so I flew home and got the license. Iron Hawk was among the dogs Alan had brought north." Iron Hawk (Red Zero-Adina Dream) had already had a couple of runs in NSW winning at Bathurst over 507m and Gunnedah over 347m and being beaten at Cessnock.

"It was August 18, 1977 and he was in a 420m Fourth Grade," said Rayner. "And he was favourite. "I took an instant liking to him. He was a lovely cut of a dog."

Rayner reports the dog "fell out of the boxes" and clearly remembers racecaller Mick Cox declaring "Iron Hawk a 100-1 chance" in the back straight when a clear last.

But Iron Hawk flew home and got up to win in 24.75. "That was good enough for me," said Rayner. He approached Alan after the race about buying the dog and Alan suggested he ring Jack. "They were all for sale," said Rayner.

But that same night, Victorian based trainer John Kelly approached Alan Pringle to buy the dog with an offer of \$10,000.

"I couldn't get on the phone quick enough to ask Jack about buying him," said Rayner.

"But I told him Kelly had \$10,000 to buy him.

"Jack said I could buy the dog, and \$4000 would get him. I took bought straight away."

Iron Hawk went back to NSW and stayed there for



Peter Rayner with one of the many trophies his team has won and in front of a picture of his first great galloper Iron Hawk.

another couple of months while the Pringles set him up for a betting plunge at Wentworth Park ... he ran third and Peter Rayner took him home that night.

"He was a very, very placid dog with a beautiful nature," he said. "We could do anything with him." In all Iron Hawk started 34 times for 14 wins "and wasn't unplaced too often".

His first start for Rayner was a Gabba heat of the NSW St Leger which he won in 32.90.

“I knew then I had something special,” he said. He made the final at Wenty but was unplaced.”
 He then ran a race record winning the Top Simbi Trophy, ran second in the Foundation Gift then one of the Gabba’s premier events.

	Which Chariot*
Chariot Charm	That’s Sunny
Red Zero	Spare Tank
Grand Duel	Fighting Julie
IRON HAWK	Which Chariot*
Takiri	Gemdelina
Adina Dream	Boy Rainbird
First Rainbow	Special Rainbird

It wasn’t long before Iron hawk was one of the best sprinters in Australia. He ran a race record winning a heat of the National Derby and then was flattened at the jump by another runner, ironically a dog trained by Jack Pringle, in the final.
 He ran a race record of 32.52 winning a semi of the Qld Derby and was knocked down five times but still pushed between runners to win on the line.
 Mick Cox declared he couldn’t win that one either. He added the Foundation Gift and then ran a Gabba track record of 32.39 winning a heat of the Brisbane Cup by 10 lengths. He held the record for seven years.



Peter's company produced a bronze of Iron Hawk in full gallop and it is on proud display in the Rayner home.

“The final was so full of trouble that the winner ran 33.31 that year,” said Rayner.
 In all he ran five race records and one track record. He was a greyhound of the year finalist in 1979 the year Gallant Anne swept the award.
 “He was a good beginner specially from wide draws,” said Rayner. “He was always a sound dog and with a stud career beckoning we retired him.”
 Unfortunately Iron Hawk was sent to Mackay where he had a spate of bookings one month and was bitten by a snake killing him.
 In all he won \$16,470 in stakes.
 His influence at stud was good without being great. He is the sire of legendary broodbitch Tardy Angel and Rayner raced a number of his progeny with success.
 “He was such a placid dog that he developed a trait of coming out into the parade ring for his races and immediately laying down and almost going to sleep,” said Rayner.
 “It was an amazing thing to see.”
 Iron Hawk was an amazing dog.