



MEDIA RELEASE

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19th February 2007

“A Romantic end to the Gold Cup”

Mario Abela waited 40 years for his first city winner but the Rouse Hill hobby trainer tasted group glory when Romantic Diva (\$6.50) scored in last Saturday night's Group 2 Winning Edge Kibble Gold Cup final at Wentworth Park.

Ironically it was Romantic Diva who gave Abela that elusive initial metropolitan win and he was overcome with emotion when she held on to win Saturday night's big race.

Best known as a leading stayer she found the front and led the quality field a merry dance, but as they turned for home the challengers were coming thick and fast. Romantic Diva dug deep and just had held on in the shadows of the post to hold off Spalding (\$4.20) by a head who was runner up last year to Royal Riddle. Zoe Sky (\$31.00) was another length away third in 42.90.

“I was just hoping she could lead and keep it going and when she was still there at the turn I got very excited. I wasn't watching the T.V. I was watching her live and when the post came up you can't see what has happened over at the 700 start so I didn't know if she had hung on. I don't know if she is a true stayer as such but she does try hard out in front and if you can break 43 seconds you always got a chance if there is some trouble behind you which is what happened tonight.” Abela said after the race.

Abela, who has just two dogs in work, builds kitchens by profession, and is the owner of the successful Castlewood Kitchens, a greyhound racing sponsor. Close friend Peter Rodgers said after the race:

“Mario has had dogs since he was 15 and didn't get his first city winner until he was 55. “Tonight's win was a just reward for a terrific guy.” Abela and a syndicate of friends bought Romantic Diva at the Dapto puppy auction for \$7000. The bitch is a daughter of Molly's Osti, who is the dam of a promising Royal Assassin pup called Little Fang making his debut at Richmond on Monday. Abela races Little Fang in partnership with Rodgers.

The rest of field after the placed runners finished in the following order. 4th Kibble Kruncha (\$3.00 fav), 5th Media Watch (\$21.00), 6th Excused (\$8.00), 7th Kulu Spirit (\$3.20) and Angel Doll (\$18.00).

By Just The Best from Molly's Osti's (Token Prince x Sunning Osti) Romantic Diva is a Black bitch whelped December 2003. She has now won 12 races and been placed on seven occasions from her 30 starts. The NCA Gold Cup first prize of \$25,000 brings Romantic Diva's overall prizemoney to, \$59,625.

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A time-honoured event the NCA Gold Cup was first run in 1966 and has certainly had some name changes over the years. It was first called the Wentworth Park Gold Cup. For one year in 1970 it was called the Sir Joseph Banks Cup and again in 1975 was called the Eastern Suburbs Gold Cup. In 1982 and 83 the race became the Paddy's Market Cup and for one year in 1991 it carried the name of the Premiers Gold Cup. In the main it has always been the NCA Gold Cup and for the last few years has enjoyed the sponsorship of the Winning Edge Company. Like the Association Cup it has been won by some superstars of the Australian staying ranks. Greyhounds like Zoom Top, Ragsie, Miss High Lo, National Lass, Dalalla and Irinka Barbie. Listed below is the full honour roll.

1966 **Brigdale**, 1967 **Special Pick**, 1968 **Zoom Top**, 1969 **Zoom Top**, 1970 **Heather Rev**, 1971 **Strand Belle**, 1972 **Ragsie**, 1973 **Fantasy Lady**, 1974 **Miss High Lo**, 1975 **Dainty Wanda**, 1976 **That's Eddy**, 1977 **The Wee Lassie**, 1978 **Kawati Boy**, 1979 **Nimble Twinkle**, 1980 **Mercia Bale**, 1981 **"Abandoned"**, 1982 **Any Puzzle**, 1983 **Jane's Replica**, 1984 **Kongwak**, 1985 **Sharyn's Vogue**, 1986 **National Lass**, 1987 **Major Look**, 1988 **Red's Comic**, 1989 **Miss Pegasus**, 1990 **Lilac Livery**, 1991 **Swazi Joker**, 1992 **Equability**, 1993 **Prime Marshall**, 1994 **Rob's Rebel**, 1995 **Keon Star**, 1996 **Groovy Dancer**, 1997 **Red Mystique**, 1998 **Ringside Fire**, 1999 **Dalalla**, 2000 **Amazing Dancer**, 2001 **Pearl Larricki**, 2002 **Outrageous Angel**, 2003 **Bella's Angel**, 2004 **Irinka Barbie**, 2005 **Best Quoted** and 2006 **Royal Riddle**.

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