

Sprinter flies under the radar

DECISION Time, racing's "working class hero", doesn't seem to get the recognition his race record deserves, according to trainer Clarry Conners.

But that could all change if Decision Time lowers the boom on the likes of Masquerader and Halekulani in the Group Two \$175,000 Stan Fox Stakes (1400m) at Royal Randwick today.

Conners, who has trained a string of outstanding gallopers including Research, Tierce, Burst, Encounter and Belle Du Jour, said Decision Time "seems to fly under everyone's radar".

"He doesn't get the write-ups in the papers that the superstars get," Conners said. "But he's been there since day one, he's still there and has already won over \$1 million. I think 'working class hero' sort of suits this horse because he just gets the job done every start."

Decision Time won his first four starts as a juvenile before seconds in the Todman Slipper (behind Masquerader) and Golden Slipper (to Crystal Lily).

In four starts this spring, Decision Time has picked up a cheque each run, including his return to winning form in the Heritage Stakes last start.

"They say horses don't come up after the Golden Slipper but he has come up better than ever," Conners added.

However, Conners revealed even if Decision Time was to win the Stan Fox Stakes easily, he was unlikely to run the chestnut in the \$1 million Caulfield Guineas (1600m) on October 9.

"I'd say it is 99 per cent certain that he is not going to run in the Guineas ... I believe he is probably better suited to sprints."

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Hay presto and he's on A-list

NEW sprint star Hay List has passed his first test at the highest level with a dominant victory in the Group 1 Manikato Stakes at Moonee Valley.

Hay List missed the start by a neck but Glyn Schofield hunted him forward and he took control of the race.

Reward For Effort took him on briefly in the middle stages but Hay List fought him off and went on to beat True Persuasion by a comfortable 2½ lengths in a slick \$69,945 for the 1200m.

Formerly trained in Perth, Hay List is now in the care of John McNair at Gosford on the NSW Central Coast.

"Once he got to the front I was happy and then when Reward For Effort took him on I was slightly concerned," McNair said. "But then he dropped off."

Schofield has ridden many winners around the world and said he had no doubts at all.

"He missed the start but quickly recovered," Schofield said.

"From that point on it was never in doubt. He's just the perfect racehorse. He is the most exciting horse I've ridden in many, many years and the best is still to come."

Hay List's record now stands at 11 wins from 13 starts.

Back on track

'Crack' gives crock new lease of life



SIMON WHITE

YOU'VE heard of the Horse Whisperer. Now meet the Horse Manipulator.

James Gardiner is a horse chiropractor, who makes his living - or at least part of it - "cracking" the spines of 600kg thoroughbreds.

To the general public, Gardiner's craft is mystery. Most outside the racing community won't even have heard of it.

But ask a trainer and they'll likely tell you properly performed equine chiropractic is an indispensable tool of trade.

And, according to Gardiner, it isn't nearly as dangerous as it sounds.

"Once horses realise you're there to help, they're generally very relaxed," Gardiner explains.

"I can't tell you any stories about horses I was working on going crazy but I can tell you a story that's the opposite to that."

"There was one horse down at Morphetville that enjoyed having me work on him, so much so that he'd get annoyed if I ever went to the stable and worked with other horses but not him."

"One day, I'd left after working on other horses and the trainer rang me and asked if I could come back and adjust this particular horse, because he was just going off."

Gardiner works with up to 30

horses a week, which equates to several million dollars of thoroughbred flesh running through his hands each year.

A showjumper in his native Canada, Gardiner struck only one - not so small - hitch in fulfilling an ambition to become a horse chiropractor.

His mentor insisted he learn both horse and human chiropractic, which meant an eight-year university course.

Gardiner moved to Australia straight after graduation - "Canada was too cold" - and one of his earliest local clients was Morphetville trainer David Balfour, who still swears by his services.

"He's no quack off the street," Balfour says.

"He's an absolute professional and has helped a lot of my horses."

Gardiner's best known "patient" is Melbourne Cup runner-up On A Jeune but the one who has given him the greatest joy is his own stayer Perillo.

It would not be an exaggeration to describe nine-year-old Perillo (known affectionally as Hughie) as a labour of love for Gardiner - plus his wife Angie and children Sophie and Lachlan.

Gardiner first came across Perillo in June 2005.

The horse, to put it bluntly, was a crock and had a torn sacroiliac ligament (at the junction of the pelvis and the spine) that prevented him from bearing the weight of a jockey.

It took two years of chiropractic work - plus attention from a farrier and nutritionist - to get Perillo back to racing.

Perillo had four starts in the winter of 2007 for Gardiner (who had taken out a trainers' licence), then became a city winner in 2008 under the care of Roslyn Day.

He returned to Gardiner to win two races at Morphetville last year and so far this preparation has a city win and four placings from 11 starts.

Perillo will be retired to Gardiner's picturesque Balhannah property after one final start at Morphetville tomorrow afternoon.

"He's a very human horse. When he's lost a race, he's just filthy for two or three days," Gardiner said.

"If I was to compare him with a person, I'd say he was like a real hard

working guy, who doesn't have any vices, comes home to his family every night and then volunteers in the Country Fire Service on the weekend."

Gardiner, who regards himself as a rookie trainer, says Perillo has taught him lessons that can be transferred to human chiropractic.

"When I think back to the first few months of him being in the paddock, he was just so depressed," Gardiner recalls.

"Apart from having a sore back, his whole nervous system was affected. He had chronic diarrhoea and it was sad to see."

"It made me think about humans and the way back pain affects their whole lives."

"They can't sleep properly, it wears them down mentally, it impacts on their nervous systems and they often have digestive problems. Fix the problem and you can enrich their lives."

There is no doubt Perillo has enriched Gardiner's life but it might be three-year-old daughter Sophie who summed it up best of all.

"She looked out the window one day and saw me leading Perillo, then turned around to Angie and said 'I'm Mummy's baby but Hughie is Daddy's baby,'" Gardiner laughed.

"We had to laugh but it said it all."

HANDS-ON: Horse chiropractor James Gardiner and wife Angie, left, with their racehorse Perillo and, below, James treating his pride and joy.
Main pictures: **SIMON CROSS**



WINNING TOUCH

PERILLO

Nine-year-old gelding
Sire: Perugino
Dam: Talent Lover
Record: 47 starts.
Five wins, six seconds,
seven thirds
Prizemoney: \$111,500
Four city wins

PRE-INJURY (July 2004-June 2005)

Trainer: Leon Macdonald
Record: 11 starts. one win,
one second, one third
Prizemoney: \$8090

POST-INJURY (June 2007 to present)

Trainers: James Gardiner, Roslyn Day
Record: 36 starts four wins, five
seconds, six thirds
Prizemoney: \$103,410