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The Courier Mail

Tuesday, April 30, 2024

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Picture: Liam Kidston

STARS COME OUT TO PLAY

The stage is set for a history-making Queensland Racing Carnival, with 10 action-packed weeks of racing and a record \$28m in prize money attracting the biggest and best names to the Sunshine State through winter. Netball star Tippah Dwan and her partner, Brisbane Lions vice-captain Josh Dunkley, will be front and centre as ambassadors for The Star Stradbroke Season, which launches on Saturday at Eagle Farm racecourse.

REPORT INSIDE

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Breeding ground for future stars

Racing Minister Grace Grace

The most-lucrative Queensland Racing Carnival yet is here.

Commencing on Saturday, all eyes will be firmly focused on Queensland as some of the nation's premier gallopers grace our hallowed turf for 11 action-packed meetings.

This year's carnival is our richest and most innovative to date, with more than \$28m in prize money – including eight Group 1 features – and nine million-dollar races.



Racing Minister Grace Grace

Headlined by the \$3m Stradbroke Handicap, the carnival continues to be a breeding ground for the future stars of Australasian racing.

In 2023, we saw past and future The Everest champions, Giga Kick and Think About It, dominate the winter, as well as Q22 champion, Without A Fight, who went on to claim the Caulfield Cup/Melbourne Cup double for the first time since Ethereal in 2001.

Stradbroke Day on June 15 will once again act as the crowning jewel of the carnival, with the time-honoured feature sitting alongside the \$1m Group 1 JJ Atkins and the \$1.2m Group 2 Q22 on a day that will boast more than \$6.5m in total prize money.

At the front-end of the program, the Hollindale Stakes will once again play host to some of Australasia's best middle-distance horses, while the Caloundra Cup Raceday will take up its customary position as the carnival's fitting finale.

In what remains one of my favourite meetings, thousands will once again fill the lawns of the Ipswich Turf Club for their biggest meeting of the year, while the Tattersall's Tiara will showcase the final Group 1 of the national racing season.

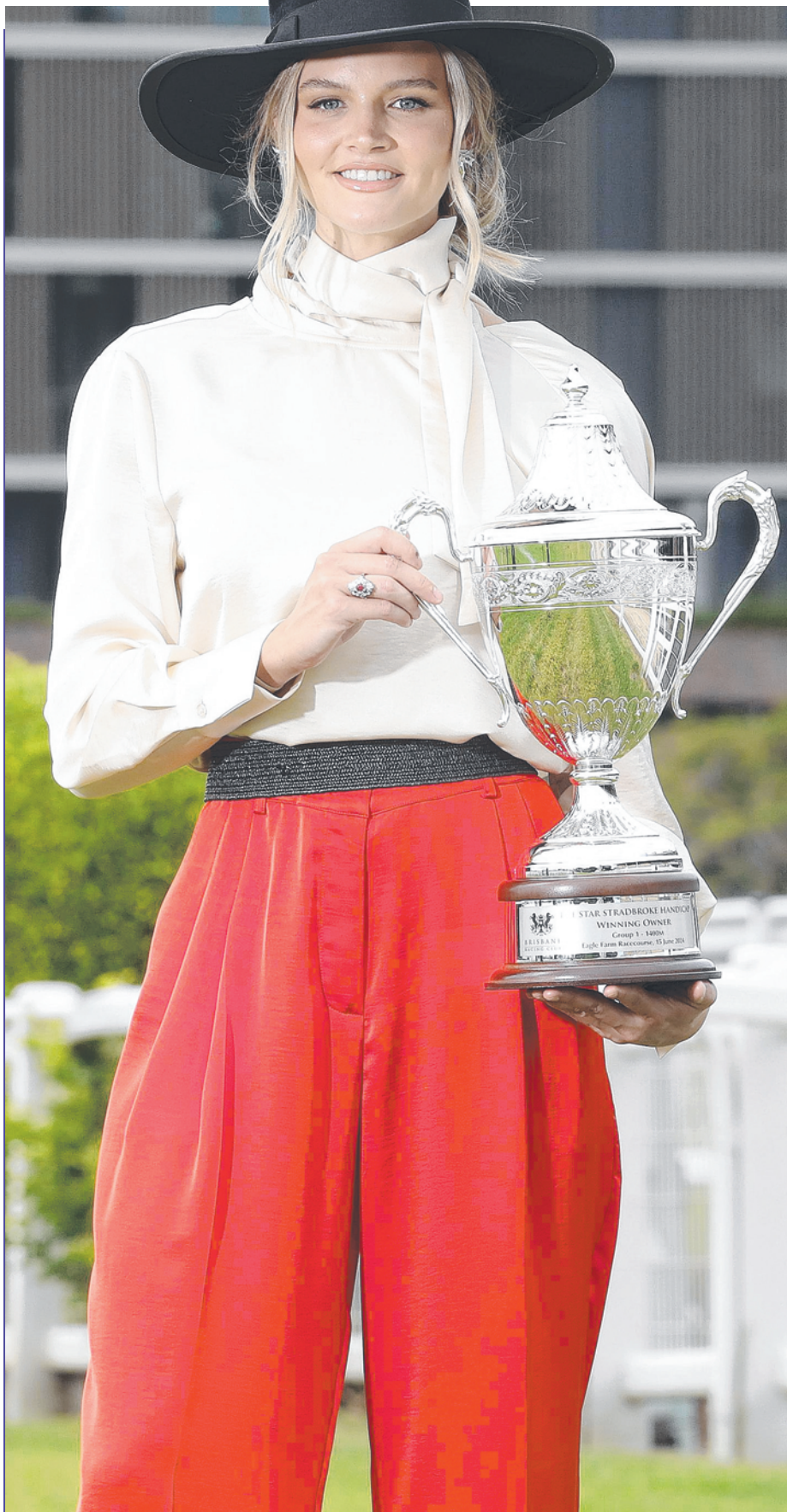
The carnival showcases everything that is great about local food, fun and fashion from across the state – and we look forward to welcoming our country participants to Eagle Farm once again thanks to the Battle of the Bush series.

Good luck to those involved over the coming weeks.

Grace Grace is Minister for State Development and Infrastructure, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing



Giga Kick wins the Group 1 Doomben 10,000 in 2023. Picture: Grant Peters/Trackside Photography



Brisbane Racing Club's Stradbroke Season ambassador Queensland Firebirds netballer Tippah Dwan with The Star Stradbroke Handicap trophy. Picture: Liam Kidston

Setting trends in the fashion stakes

Andre Grimaux

She wears a dress on the netball court for the Queensland Firebirds, but gun goal attack Tippah Dwan loves a tailored suit at the races.

The 24-year-old and her partner, Brisbane Lions vice-captain Josh Dunkley, are the ambassadors for The Star Stradbroke Season this winter.

It means swapping their sporting gear for a few race days at Eagle Farm and Doomben, when their playing schedules allow.

They will both attend Ladbrokes Derby Day on June 1 as Brisbane Racing Club ambassadors, and

Dunkley is a likely starter for The Star Stradbroke Day on June 15 – the day after the Lions play St Kilda at the Gabba.

"The races here in Brisbane are easily accessible and relaxed," Dunkley, 27, said.

"It's more intimate at the Brisbane racecourses than in other cities. You can get up close to the horses around the mounting yards and as they head to the tracks."

In a cover shoot for The Courier-Mail's Queensland Racing Carnival guide, Dwan wore the Stradbroke Day theme of black and white with a touch of red.

She wore a top and red

pants from Husk, Adorne belt, Martina McGrath Millinery hat and jewellery from Artisans Bespoke Jewellers. Claire Andrea from Epic looked after hair and make-up, and Dunkley wore a Mannzilo suit.

"I love racewear fashion and seeing how everyone puts their looks together," Dwan said.

"I'm really excited to see what people are going to be wearing during The Star Stradbroke Season."

"I love that tailored suits are in for women. Suits are so stylish and comfortable."

"And I love colour, coloured pants in particular, and beautiful hats and headbands."

Carnival ready to launch spring success

Father and son head north for sun and glory

Trenton Akers

The Freedmans have long used Queensland as a launching pad for spring ambitions and the Melbourne Cup-winning duo of Anthony and Sam are going bigger than ever in 2024.

The father and son combo will send a 16-strong team to the Sunshine State over the winter, with Anthony to base himself out of the Sunshine Coast as they look to match their feats from 12 months ago.

The Freedmans launched Without A Fight from Queensland during the winter before going on to win the Caulfield and Melbourne Cups in dominant fashion.

It was a move inspired by the great Doriemus, who they based out of Queensland almost 30 years ago before going on to win spring Group 1s for two consecutive years in 1995 and 1996.

"They (Freedman brothers) brought Doriemus out to Queensland about 30 years ago, it was something they used to do a lot in the 90s and early 2000s," Sam (pictured) said.

"They went off it a little bit because you have to be pretty organised with it all, so we are trying to make it a thing every year with the right staff, vets and farriers to make it go like clockwork."

"We don't run a lot of horses in Melbourne in the winter, it is more about getting the

yearlings in and training them up.

"We are treating it a bit like America where they follow the sun, the stables move around a bit over there, so we are doing that with the horses it is worth doing it for."

"It is a costly thing for the horses that are up here, so they have to serve their purpose when they are up here."

While Without A Fight stole the headlines last year, the Freedmans are keen to launch the career of some youngsters from Queensland as well.

The Melbourne Cup winner is in a race against time to be fit again for the spring after suffering a minor tendon injury last year, however he is likely to still make a visit north.

In their small stable of raiders are a group of two-year-olds, who are looking to bring Victorian stakes-level class to South East Queensland.

"It is a real mix of horses," Sam said.

"Without A Fight will even come back up here, but he probably won't race, he will just be up here to get some sun on his back really."

"There are some nice fillies like Matisse comes out of the Blue Diamond to come here, it is a nice team. Melbourne is cold, so it is good to get the spring horses up to Queensland."

While the southern brigade converges on Queensland in search of warmer weather, carnival winners and stories of spring success could be right under our noses instead.

Toowoomba sensation Incentivise went from a Sunshine Coast maiden to Caulfield Cup winner in the space of a few months after winning his way through the winter racing season.



Trainer Rob Heathcote picks out Abounding

for success in the Stradbroke

JEWEL IN THE CROWN IS TARGET

Trenton Akers

Rob Heathcote has come so close to winning Queensland's premier race the Stradbroke Handicap – so many times with geldings – he reckons it's about time to try it with the fairer sex instead.

The multiple Group 1 winner has identified his Magic Millions Guineas winner Abounding as the horse to help him tackle the mountain as he looks to aim for a bumper winter carnival.

For so long the Stradbroke has evaded Heathcote, even his world-conquering Buffering fell short in heart breaking circumstances.

While the likes of Buffering and Rothfire have been forced to carry the grandstand in the famous handicap, Heathcote is looking to the other end of the spectrum this year.

The veteran trainer is inspired by the deeds of fellow Queenslanders John O'Shea and Barry Baldwin, who have won it with three-year-old fillies that are renowned for sneaking in with a feather-weight on their back instead. "I have run second three times in the race along with a third and a fourth," he said.

"It is one of the time honoured handicaps in Australia,

the great Buffering was at the peak of his powers and he ran two seconds in it.

"Mid Summer Music (2012) knocked us off then who could ever forget that ghostly grey (Linton, 2013) sneaking up along the fence?"

"Rothfire ran the race of his life with 57.5kg and barrier 18 and runs second."

Heathcote is under no illusions as to the task that lies ahead when it comes to getting his glamour filly into the race and says she will have to earn her way in the \$3m race.

"It is our feature race, but it is the hardest race in Queensland to win, look at last year, Think About It shows up and wins it then goes on to win an Everest, we ran into a freak," he said.

"It is a race I would love to win, but at the end of the day if you don't, the sun still comes up the day after it and you get to do it all again.



"It is unbelievably attractive to run a filly. I remember cutting my teeth and John O'Shea did it with Private Steer and Barry Baldwin did it with La Montagna.

"I would love to do it with the best three-year-old 1400m horse I have had for a long time, that is Abounding, and she has proven herself at the level in the Magic Millions Guineas.

"With a light weight over 1400m on her home track, Jesus, she will be there to beat, but I have to get her there yet.

"It is a good path and one well taken, the Gold Coast Guineas into Fred Best into the Stradbroke."

While Abounding is at \$26 in betting with TAB, she isn't Heathcote's only winter weapon.

He will aim up with the highly touted Press Link who is set to tackle the Queensland Guineas, while sprinting stable stalwart Prince Of Boom will play a role in the sprint features.

"It has always been our premier eight or so weeks of the season, it is condensed a bit now but it is still the best," Heathcote said.

"I hope the weather can ease up and give the curators some time."



Trainer Rob Heathcote with his three-year-old filly Abounding at his stables at Eagle Farm. Pictures: Lachle Millard

Time to be proud of event

Andre Grimaux

Racing chiefs say the Queensland Racing Carnival has become a truly world-class sporting event the state should be proud of.

The winter carnival received the seal of approval from racing queen Gai Waterhouse ahead of the first race day last year.

Waterhouse said she and co-trainer Adrian Bott would continue to send their horses to soak up the sun and quality Group 1 competition.

And the 2023 carnival lived up to the hype with The Star Stradbroke winner Think About It going on to claim honours in The Everest, and Without A Fight winning the Caulfield-Melbourne Cup double after saluting in the Sky Racing Q22 at Eagle Farm.

Racing Queensland chief executive Jason Scott said the carnival championed everything that was great about the Sunshine State.

"There's no better place to race than the Queensland Racing Carnival," he said.

"Every year, we see the next generation of stars make their name right here in Queensland, with eight Group 1s and nine million-dollar races ensuring all eyes are on SEQ for almost three months of feature racing.

"For the first time, we welcome Magic Millions to the program thanks to a new \$1m race for 2YOs under lights, strategically placed to sit alongside the popular Gold Coast National Weanling, Broodmare and Yearling Sale in May."

Brisbane Racing Club chief executive Tony Partridge said The Star Stradbroke Season at



Racing Queensland chief executive Jason Scott

Eagle Farm and Doomben was now a "world-class" event in this city.

Major events outside the race days have been added to the program, including Breakfast with the Stars at Eagle Farm, the Stradbroke Barrier Draw in King George Square and the Ladbrokes Calcutta dinner and charity night at Howard Smith Wharves.

"The quality of racing, broadcast and the race day experience reached new benchmarks last year due to the support of Australia's leading stables and BRC's major commercial partners," Mr Partridge said.

"We look forward to welcoming Queensland locals and interstate visitors to our race tracks to witness the best horses, trainers and jockeys in action and experience the finest trackside hospitality offered by any racing club in Australia.

"Our culinary team proudly showcase Queensland's best produce, we offer a range of packages to suit varied tastes and budgets, and our friendly race day staff ensure guests have a thoroughly enjoyable day out."

KEY DATES: 2024 QUEENSLAND RACING CARNIVAL

SATURDAY, MAY 4

Brisbane Racing Club at Eagle Farm

Features the \$350,000 Sky Racing Queensland Guineas (Group 2, 1600m) and \$300,000 Victory Stakes (Group 2, 1200m). Launches The Star Stradbroke Season with six race days between May 4 and June 15.

SATURDAY, MAY 11

Gold Coast Turf Club at Caloundra

The main feature is the \$500,000 TAB AD Hollindale Stakes (Group 2, 1800m).

SATURDAY, MAY 18

Brisbane Racing Club at Doomben

The \$1.5m Ladbrokes Doomben 10,000 (Group 1, 1200m) is the highlight as elite sprinters chase the \$900,000 first prize. Other features include the \$300,000 Spirit of Boom Classic (Group 2, 1200m) and \$250,000 Rough Habit Plate (Group 3, 2000m).

FRIDAY, MAY 24

Gold Coast Turf Club, Bundall

The \$1m Magic Millions National 2YO Classic (1000m) is a new race and highlight at this night meeting.

SATURDAY, MAY 25

Brisbane Racing Club at Doomben

Features the \$1m XXXX Doomben Cup (Group 1, 2000m) with \$600,000 to the winner. Also, don't miss the \$300,000 The Roses (Group 2, 2000m) and \$300,000 BRC Sprint (Group 3, 1350m).

SATURDAY, JUNE 1

Brisbane Racing Club at Eagle Farm

The \$1m Ladbrokes Queensland Derby (Group 1, 2400m), \$1m Eva Air Kingsford Smith Cup (Group 1, 1300m) and \$1m Aquis Stallions BRC Sires' Produce (Group 2, 1400m)

are the highlights in a meeting, which also includes the \$300,000 Fred Best Classic (Group 3, 1400m).

SATURDAY, JUNE 8

Brisbane Racing Club at Eagle Farm

The main feature is the \$700,000 Seven Queensland Oaks (Group 1, 2200m) with other highlights being the \$500,000 Magic Millions National Classic (1600m) and \$300,000 The Star Moreton Cup (Group 2, 1200m).

SATURDAY, JUNE 15

Brisbane Racing Club at

Eagle Farm

The \$3m The Star Stradbroke Handicap (Group 1, 1400m) is the highlight with more than \$6.5m in prize money on offer. The \$1.2m Sky Racing Q22 (Group 2, 2200m), \$1m Ladbrokes JJ Atkins (Group 1, 1600m), \$400,000 XXXX Brisbane Cup (Group 2, 3200m) and \$300,000 Magic Millions Dane Ripper Stakes (Group 2, 1300m) are other feature races.

SATURDAY, JUNE 22

Ipswich Turf Club, Bundamba

The features races are the \$250,000 Ipswich Cup (2150m), \$200,000 Eye Liner Stakes (1350m) and \$160,000 Gai Waterhouse Classic (1200m).

SATURDAY, JUNE 29

Tattersall's Racing Club at Eagle Farm

The \$700,000 Tattersall's Tiara (Group 1, 1400m) is the highlight.

SATURDAY, JULY 6

Sunshine Coast Turf Club, Caloundra

Feature races are the Caloundra Cup (2400m), Winx Guineas (Group 3, 1600m) and Glasshouse Cup (1400m), each worth \$300,000.

THE STAR STRADBROKE SEASON EVENTS

PUNTERS NIGHT WITH THE PUMPER

Ladbrokes Lounge Rough Habit Deck, Eagle Farm racecourse, May 24, 6-9pm

On the eve of the XXXX Doomben Cup Day, join champion jockey Jim 'Pumper' Cassidy, who won the cup three times.

BREAKFAST WITH THE STARS

Members Reserve, Eagle Farm racecourse, June 11, gates open 6am

A free community event with breakfast bites and refreshments. Catch the thoroughbreds testing the track prior to The Star Stradbroke Handicap. Register at brc.com.au.

THE STAR STRADBROKE HANDICAP BARRIER DRAW

King George Square, Brisbane CBD, June 11, from

4.30pm

The gates for this \$3m sprint will be decided at the event, also to be streamed live.

THE STAR \$3M STRADBROKE LADBROKES CALCUTTA

Rivershed, Howard Smith Wharves, Brisbane, June 13, 6-10pm

A two-course dinner and beverage package with a percentage of the Calcutta pool donated to a charity chosen by the Brisbane Racing Club Foundation.

FASHIONS ON THE FIELD

Three of Brisbane's luxury brands – high-end womenswear label Astille, custom suiting and menswear label Mannzilo

and Artisans Bespoke Jewellers – present Fashions on the Field for The Star Stradbroke Season 2024.

The competition will be held on the Ladbrokes Derby Day, Seven Oaks Day and The Star Stradbroke Day.

Judges will select the top-three best dressed each day. Prizes include an Eva Air Brisbane-Asia airfare valued at \$2950 and fashion, beauty and accessory vouchers. They will look for entrants who put their most fashionable foot forward with unique, aspirational looks embracing each day's fashion theme and celebrate the carnival's style and energy.

On Ladbrokes Derby Day, the fashion theme is the traditional Derby

combination of black and white. Soft colour, florals and sophisticated style will be the order of the day for Seven Oaks Day.

The Star Stradbroke Day is the pinnacle Fashions on the Field competition day with a traditional theme of black and white with a touch of red.

CARNIVAL TASTE TEST

All tastes, budgets and guests will be catered for during The Star Stradbroke Season whether racegoers are enjoying a day in a general admission precinct or an exclusive event space with a canape-style menu or a premium buffet, according to Brisbane Racing Club executive chef John Felesina. "We work together with our growers, we buy in

season, fresh and local to secure the highest quality available," he said.

Among treats new for 2024 will be premium, yearling grain-fed beef sourced from cattle raised on properties across Queensland and the Northern Territory and handmade savoury Portuguese egg custard tartlets filled with hardwood-smoked belly bacon,

hinterland chives and sharp Mary Valley cheddar.

Ocean-caught wild Mooloolaba prawns, Humpty Doo barramundi and Kingaroy pork are popular and traditional items.



All the fun of cup day

Stephen Nadin

The Queensland Racing Carnival will conclude on the Sunshine Coast for Caloundra Cup Day on Saturday, July 6.

The racing card has been spiced up with a new \$200,000 race adding to the three existing \$300,000 feature races.

Away from the Corbould Park track, racegoers can also look forward to a new festival hub named The Avenue.

Sunshine Coast Turf Club marketing and events manager Taryn Delaney said the Palm Springs-inspired pink-and-green oasis would include music from James Mack and 42 Band, food trucks and bars, and interactive entertainment from sponsors such as Canadian Club and TAB.

Meanwhile, racing kings and queens will unite with the best of remote Queensland at the Tattersall's Tiara race day on June 29 at Eagle Farm.

The allure of the \$700,000 Group 1 Tattersall's Tiara continues to attract the nation's best fillies and mares.

Racing Queensland's \$200,000 Battle of the Bush and its accompanying Fashions From Afar will take centre stage.

Tattersall's Club president Paul Williams said for more than 150 years, Tattersall's Club had fostered communities of Queenslanders centred around friendship and common interests, particularly horse racing.

Off the track, attendees can also enjoy live entertainment on the main stage throughout the day, along with the traditional Fashions on the Field.

Corporate packages and tickets are available from the Brisbane Racing Club website at brc.com.au.



Chris Munce and Kyle Wilson-Taylor (also below) combine to win their first Group 1 race with Palaisipan in the Tattersall's Tiara at Eagle Farm last year. Pictures: Grant Peters/Trackside Photography

KYLE'S A YOUNG MAN ON A MISSION

Wilson-Taylor is set to enhance his reputation after Group 1 Tatt's Tiara win at last year's carnival

Ben Dorries

Young Queensland jockey Kyle Wilson-Taylor snagged his first Group 1 triumph during the winter carnival last year and it was another remarkable chapter in his life journey.

Wilson-Taylor, 24, had a tough upbringing and there were occasions when he didn't know where he was going to sleep from night to night as he grew up in Victoria.

Through sheer determi-

nation, single-minded grit and fabulous skill, Wilson-Taylor has become one of the best young jockeys in Australia.

He has never doubted himself, but the Group 1 Tatt's Tiara win on Palaisipan was an important moment, not only in his jockey career, but in his life.

"Growing up the way I did, I left Victoria with nothing, with nothing to lose anyway, I just had an ambition of being a jockey," Wilson-Taylor said.

"I always knew that I would

win a Group 1 one day. But for it to happen so early in my career was great.

"It was the culmination of one section of my life, from the tough times and pushing through them and not giving up.

"This game is all based on results and what you have achieved.

"So it was important for me to win that Group 1, it proved I can compete at the top level and the pressure doesn't get to me."

Wilson-Taylor is a man on a mission this winter.

He is never content with anything less than perfection and he never stands still in life.

One Group 1 is not enough – he wants to become a multiple Group 1 winner and cash in while the big races are on his home deck in Brisbane.

And he has his sights set on the \$3m Stradbroke Handicap, the state's most prestigious race.

Wilson-Taylor finished fourth on Palaisipan in last

year's Stradbroke when he rode the galloper at 52kg.

He says he is fitter this year and can ride even lighter, potentially opening the pathway to a golden Stradbroke opportunity.

"I rode at 52 (kg) in the Straddy last year and I'm now a lot fitter than what I was then," Wilson-Taylor said.

"I have been running flat out and that has stripped a lot of weight off me.

"I'm lucky that I'm able to ride light and I could certainly ride at 51 (kg) and I know I would be strong at the weight."

Wilson-Taylor is engaged to fellow Brisbane jockey Angela Jones who has been a great influence.

This year, Wilson-Taylor has spread his wings and ridden a winner in New Zealand and also snared a ride in the \$5m slot race The Quokka in Perth.

"I want to be a world-class rider, that's my goal, and I want to make it overseas too," he said.

Will the conditions favour the on-pacer or the backmarker?

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SKY RACING
GUINEAS DAY
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XXXX
DOOMBEN CUP
MAY 25



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DERBY DAY
JUNE 1

CHANNEL 7
OAKS DAY
JUNE 8



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THE STAR
STRADBROKE DAY
JUNE 15

TAB
IPSWICH CUP
JUNE 22



TATTERSALL'S
TIARA RACEDAY
JUNE 29



WISHLIST
CALOUNDRA CUP
JULY 6



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