

## AVONDALE PIROUETTE.

By his proud owners Robert & Kerrie Plumb.

Early this year, 2016, Australia said farewell to one of the most successful Arabian Racehorses this country has ever seen, AVONDALE PIROUETTE.

Avondale Pirouette was born in December 1984. He was by Akhu and out of Arkab Dancer. We bought him in 1987 as an Arabian racehorse as the Akhu bloodlines had already proven successful. He was only a 2 year old however was around 15.1 hands and had a huge stride. From the time I started breaking him in I realized what a true gentleman he was. He only ever had one bad habit and that was he pulled like a train. His eventual jockey commented that he had never ridden a thoroughbred racehorse that pulled as hard as he did.

Pirouette or Ernie as he was known, came last in his first race in 1988 as a three year old. He was still growing though and ended up 15.3 hands. In 1989 as a four year old he started to show what he could do. He had a a third in a 600m race at Rochester but came second in both major races that year at Rochester (1500m) and Burrumbeet (1400m,) and also at Rushworth. We knew he was better over a longer distance. In 1990 we decided to use an ex jockey to ride him in the major race at Rochester over 2000m. Although I did all of his training, when it came to the races I was too nervous and had trouble holding him. He won at last as a five year old and there was no looking back.

Racing did go a little quite in Victoria for while, until in 1994 when we were given an exhibition race at Flemington. The race was supposed to be over 1000m however it was closer to 800m. He won the race easily with another ex jockey Rob Kirkpatrick on board.

In March 1995 we were invited by the VAJC to race at Flemington again during the Australia Cup weekend. Ernie won the main race over 1200m with new jockey Brad Overall, defeating a large field of very high quality horses in a record time of 1.14.3. officially timed by the VRC. To this day his time would still be competitive overseas. During the 1995/96 season he remained unbeaten in all his races at Werribee, Bendigo, Mornington and Great Western. He was now an eleven year old. Unfortunately he only had one other start which was at Ocean Grove beach races when he was 15. It was over 600m and on sand which he hated. He missed the start but still managed to be flying home and got third.

He ran on racecourses far and wide in Victoria, Flemington twice 1994 and 1995, Bendigo (where he was trained for a few months), Werribee, Mornington, Great Western, Burrumbeet and Rochester, he even ran on a ploughed paddock at the picnic races at Rushworth, the old sprint horse track at Bacchus Marsh and at the beach races at Ocean Grove. Whilst he was being trained at Bendigo Racecourse, one of the experienced track riders commented on Ernie's ability and the that he looked a little different to the other thoroughbreds on the track. I mentioned to this trackrider that he was of Arabian Blood, and he replied, (still thinking Ernie was a thoroughbred), ""you can tell those imported Arab owned horses are a bit different, they look all quality""

Had there been more races he would have won many more. It's unfortunate that he isn't racing now. We moved to Brisbane in 2006, and he has enjoyed in his final years in the sun with his best mate Bluegrass Sirfistication (Sirf). Ernie was looking fantastic until one morning in late January, where he had trouble putting his head down. For the next four weeks he deteriorated and had trouble walking. The vets couldn't pinpoint what was wrong with him other than he possibly had a stroke or tumour on his spine. One morning we found him on the ground unable to get up. In the end we had to put him to rest, with my husband Robert holding his head in his lap. I stood beside him with his best friend of 28 years, Sirf.

