



KELLY BARNES

Part-time race caller Victoria Shaw with Melbourne Cup-winning jockey Michelle Payne at Adelaide's Oakbank racetrack yesterday

REBECCA PUDDY

Impeccably dressed and standing proudly just shy of six feet, with flaming red hair, no one can accuse Victoria Shaw of being a shrinking violet.

But as Australia's only female race caller the Victorian says she continues to butt up against sexism in the horse racing world and is booked for only 10 races a year.

Because of this, she continues to work in the construction industry by day, calling races outside of

work hours. "That's the situation I'm faced with," Shaw says. "You do wonder if that's because you're a woman."

When asked about her career aspirations, her response is quick and concise: a job.

While she describes the racing industry as "a boys' club" she is quick to acknowledge the "army of damn good blokes" who have supported her move into the caller's box, particularly her colleagues who continue to commit their personal time to help her develop her skills.

"There are some really sincere, fantastic men out there and they are the reason I keep going," she says.

"I wouldn't have continued if I didn't have their support."

Shaw will call races this weekend at South Australia's Oakbank Easter racing carnival, with female jockey Michelle Payne also appearing at the meeting.

About 60,000 racegoers are expected to visit the Oakbank course over the long weekend, with Payne riding Hufon Eagle, a horse trained by her brother

Patrick, for the Oakbank Stakes today.

Payne made racing history and dominated news headlines at the Melbourne Cup last year by not only becoming the first female jockey to win, but also telling those who thought women jockeys were not strong enough to "get stuffed".

Payne said the tide had started to turn for women in racing, but it could still be frustrating.

"I feel as though it is a hard industry whether you are female or male," Payne said. "It's a matter

of us getting the opportunity to prove ourselves."

Shaw, who will call a race featuring Payne on Monday, said she supported Payne's criticism of the male-dominated racing industry. "Michelle called it exactly how it is," Shaw said. "There are people out there who will say she's not strong enough, but she is. "By and large, Australian women are encouraged to take a back seat in life. Australia has a problem with women in power."