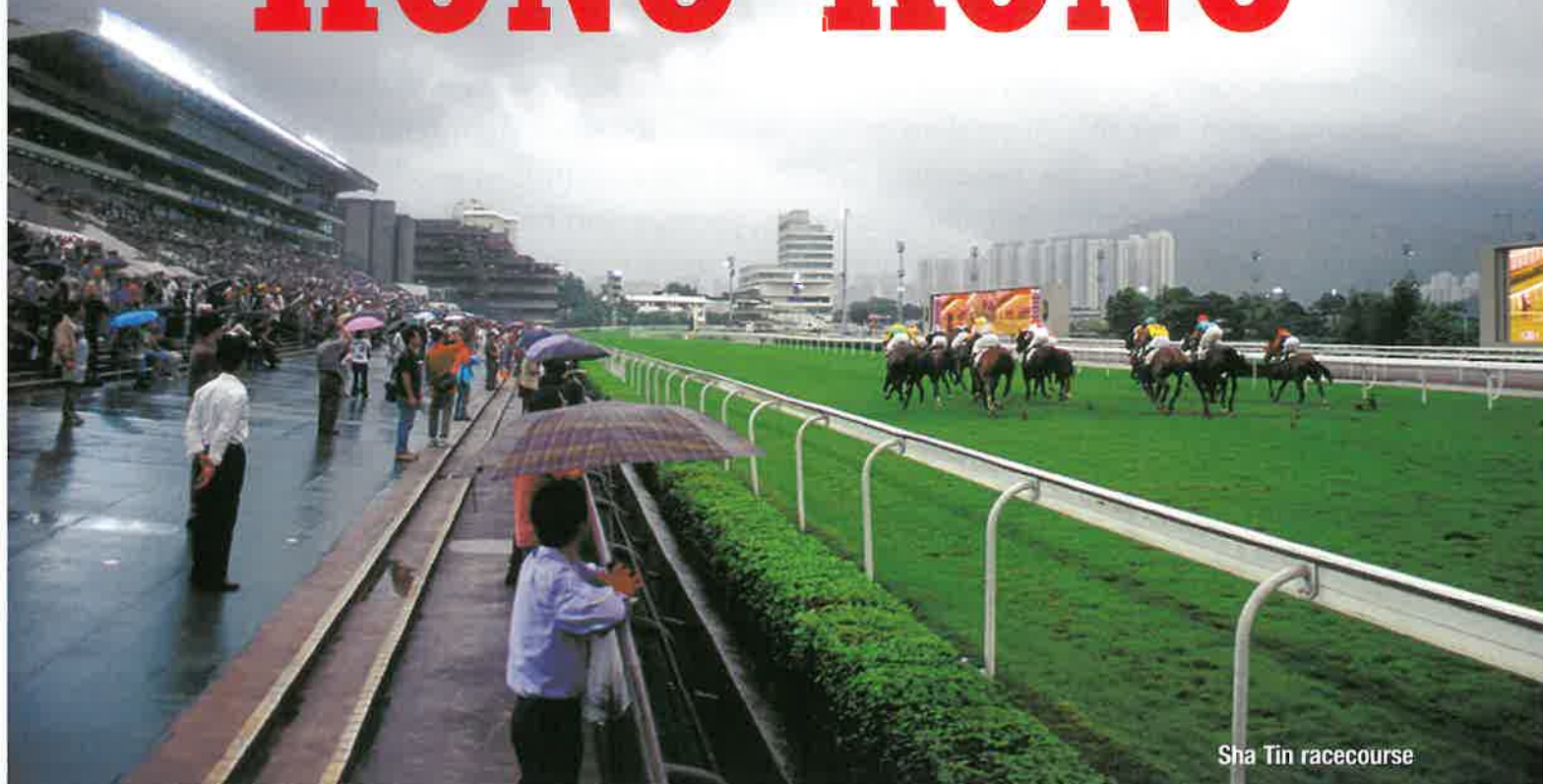


# HONG KONG



Sha Tin racecourse

**Former NSW chief steward John Schreck spent 4 years as HK chief steward & another year as consultant to the HK Jockey Club.**



He says the experience was phenomenal: "Hong Kong is an exciting place to live, with low taxes, a wonderful services industry and exceptional facilities. There are no dull race meetings. The big turnover involved in racing there, and the contribution it makes to the tax base and charities, means every race day is an important one."

Schreck believes Australian racing administrators are in demand across Asia because they are prepared to do a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. "They also genuinely like and know racing," he observes. "They are, for the most part, genuine, well trained and have good integrity." Although he believes most Australian jockeys are yet to adapt to the necessary style in Hong Kong – he cites Glen Boss as a rare exception – Schreck says our trainers are world class, making them very popular with the rank and file.

**R**acing in Hong Kong commenced with English occupation in 1841. As with most other English colonies, it was not long before horse racing was introduced, and the formation of the HK Jockey Club (HKJC) in 1884 was a sign that the sport was firmly established in the then-colony.

Initially the HKJC was a bastion of all things English (with several Chinese patrons also) and the sport had a solid following in the region. Now it has grown into the most popular entertainment and sporting club in Hong Kong. In 1971, the club made the move from amateur to professional racing, and in 1973 it was granted government permission to undertake off-course gambling. This was in response to the 'illegal gambling' market that was threatening the position of the industry.

A non-profit organisation since 1951, the Club has evolved into the largest tax-paying business in Hong Kong, paying on average 8.2% of all government taxes in 2006/07. There are 4,600 full time and 20,300 part time employees and the HKJC is ranked alongside the Rockefeller Organisation as one of the largest charity donors in the world. Such is its equine profile that it was chosen to host the equestrian events for Beijing's 2008 Olympics.

The Hong Kong Jockey Club is a unique business model in the global racing industry with all bar the trainers and jockeys being employed directly by the club. This integrated model gives complete control over the integrity of the local industry and thus creates an even platform for competition. Combine this with state of the art drug and veterinary testing units, the racing is fair and punters are assured that all horses run on their merits.

### Australian jockey Craig Williams rode in HK for 3 years from 2002-2004.

He summed up: "From a jockey's perspective, it was the greatest privilege to be contracted to ride in HK for any amount of time and is the best experience you could ever get. The competition is so fierce. You've got the best jockeys from all around the world, competing on two tracks, and a small pool of horses [just over 1,000]."



"The quality of horses improved dramatically from the first time I had a three-month stint to when I came back a year later. A lot of that [improvement] has been due to horses either being raced or bred in the Southern Hemisphere."

"Betting is huge and so there is a lot more pressure on the jockeys to perform. For the owners it's not about the money, it's about 'showing face'. They're very wealthy owners, but it's such a prestige to have a winning horse or to be in the Winner's Circle."

"The standard of horses has improved out of sight. HK has world standard horses and a lot of depth. They have selected horses and been able to afford horses from all around the world, and Southern Hemisphere horses have done particularly well there."

### "Australian rules where horses must race drug-free mean that our horses are ideally placed for export to Hong Kong."

Australian agent Jeff Gordon says the Hong Kong Jockey Club should be congratulated for its tough importation rules and the emphasis on soundness. This makes their racing better and safer for all those involved. He notes the Australian rules where horses must race drug-free mean that our horses are ideally placed for export to Hong Kong. In addition, Australian city trained horses live a similar existence to their counterparts in Hong Kong and this means that any horses exported there adjust quickly to the lifestyle.

Australian horses in HK have completely dominated one of the island's most important 'International' races. Every winner in the history of the Gr1 HK International Sprint has been Australian bred.

While the Australian thoroughbred continues to gain in stature in HK, Aussie success in the Asian region is as much about the people

### "Every winner in the history of the Gr1 Hong Kong International Sprint has been Australian bred."

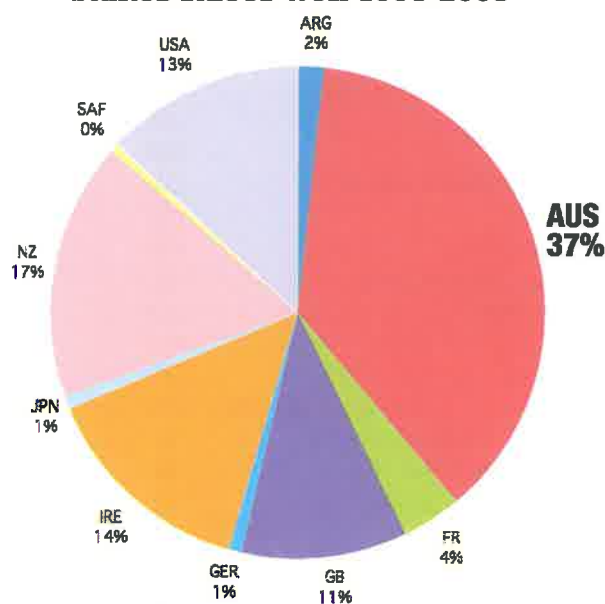
as it is about the horses. Included among them is Champion Australian trainer John Size who has just collected an astonishing fifth trainer's premiership in HK in his short seven year career there.

"I'm stoked, really stoked. If someone had told me this before I came here, I wouldn't have believed them," declared Size.

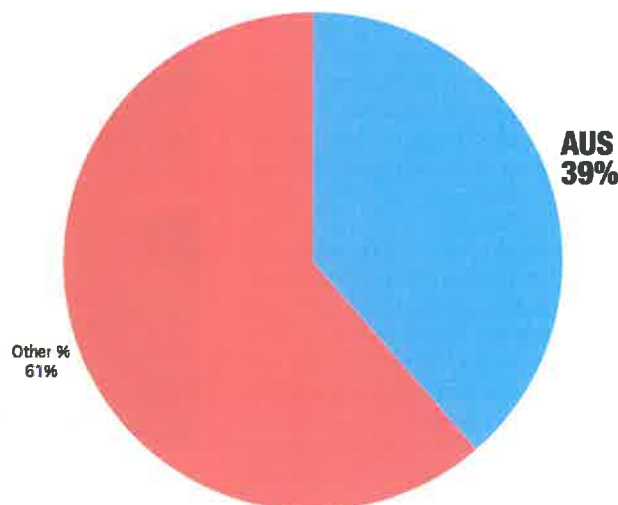
Size is very proud of his results but is not one to rest on the laurels of his achievements. He thinks the reason for his success is that he is highly critical of himself, constantly reviewing his results and thinking about improving any mistakes he's made.

His move to Hong Kong was inspired by the challenge of the situation. After training for 5-6 years in Sydney, Size was looking for an international position "before I got too old", and settled on Hong

### Stakes Races won 1998-2008



### Origin of runners in HK in 2007-08



Kong. The main attraction was that the Hong Kong Jockey Club did the majority of the business side of training, removing that distraction and leaving the trainers to train horses. His staff are employed by the Club and are chosen by the Club's HR department for him. This could make life difficult, but in his time in Hong Kong he has retained the same core staff who are reliable and competent.

Size observes that it took a couple of years to get comfortable with the environment that the horses are placed in, but realized that horses are generally more resilient than he expected. Understandably, not all horses cope with the indoor lifestyle, and to survive they need to be tough and have a patient character. On the plus side, horses are extremely well treated in Hong Kong, with vets living in the same location, fresh grass and carrots brought in every day and good staff.

"You never see a horse mistreated here," Size notes. Australian horses do well in HK because they are tough and they are bred to cope with the hard tracks that horses are expected to race on. Everything in HK is imported, including feed, so trainers can choose feed from anywhere in the world. And so what does champion trainer John Size use? "Australian feed of course, I'm Australian, mate!"



## Horses with most stakes races won in Hong Kong since 1998

HORSE	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	NUMBER	BREEDING
<b>Silent Witness</b>	AUS	13	<b>El Moxie (USA) - Jade Tiara (AUS) by Bureaucracy (NZ)</b>
Subscribe - Vengeance of Rain (HK)	NZ	7	Zabeel (NZ) - Danelagh (AUS) by Danehill (USA)
<b>Fairy King Prawn</b>	AUS	6	<b>Danehill (USA) - Twiglet (AUS) by Twig Moss (FR)</b>
<b>Scintillation</b>	AUS	6	<b>Danehill (USA) - Subterfuge (GB) by Machiavellian (USA)</b>
Al Moughazel - Bullish Luck (HK)	USA	6	Royal Academy (USA) - Wild Vintage (USA) by Alysheba
Good Ba Ba*	USA	6	Lear Fan (USA) - Elle Meme (USA) by Zilzal (USA)
<b>Sacred Kingdom*</b>	AUS	5	<b>Encosta de Lago (AUS) - Courtroom Sweetie (AUS) by Zeditave (AUS)</b>
Comic Strip - Viva Pataca (HK)	GB	5	Marju (IRE) - Comic (IRE) by Be My Chief (USA)
Electronic Unicorn	USA	5	Housebuster (USA) - Lilac Garden (USA) by Roberto (USA)
<b>Channing City</b>	AUS	4	<b>Chief's Crown (USA) - Quarantieme (AUS) by Bletchingly (AUS)</b>
<b>Desert Eagle - Grand Delight (HK)</b>	AUS	4	<b>Hurricane Sky (AUS) - Egyptian Ibis (NZ) by Straight Strike (USA)</b>
<b>Genius and Evil - Absolute Champion (HK)</b>	AUS	4	<b>Marauding (NZ) - Beauty Belle (AUS) by Ideal Planet (AUS)</b>
Ecclesiastical - Olympic Express (HK)	GB	4	Bishop of Chasel (GB) - Rachael Tennessee (USA) by Matsadon (USA)
Sir Nicholas - Red Pepper (HK)	GB	4	Cadeaux Geneveux (IRE) - Final Shot (GB) by Dalsaan (IRE)
Cheerine Kid - Super Kid (HK)	NZ	4	Gaius (IRE) - Pompeii Pride (NZ) by Pompeii Court (USA)

\*still racing

According to HK based agent David Price, the Australians provide a "great product for the right money". Underpinning this is the style of racing in HK is particularly suited to Australian racing with the majority of races being held at 1400m or shorter. Not only are the races mostly sprint contests, but several of the jockeys are Australian and races 'down-under' are run in a similar fashion to local racing.

Due to the lack of land in HK, racehorses live at the track in apartment buildings. This environment means horses need good temperaments to cope, and Australian horses have a reputation for fitting in well. That said, there is some similarity between the training environment in HK and that of a typical city stable in Australia, and this means our horses are more accustomed to life in HK before they get there. Furthermore, the racing season is southern hemisphere based starting on 1 August, giving Australian horses an age advantage over northern hemisphere-bred stock.

The majority of racing is for mature-aged horses: the Derby is run for 4YO's and all other racing is open class in terms of age.

Australian Mark Player (HK Jockey Club Head of International Races, Sale & Development) looks after the annual international race series, which includes recruiting quality runners from around the globe, and organising the events surrounding the annual festival. He is also involved with the two major horse sales in HK each year. Around 35 horses are bought at major yearling sales across the globe



Mark Player



John Size

### "Aust-bred Silent Witness was the first Hong Kong-trained horse to top the international sprint ratings."

each year, prepared for sale in their country of origin, and are then imported for a HK 2YO Breeze Up auction in December.

Another 25 yearlings are purchased in Australia and NZ each year for the Griffin Subscription Ballot. Members with a Subscription Griffin Permit pay a set price for a horse and then randomly select their future racehorse in a public ballot. Player says the Australia thoroughbred industry has played an integral role in the development of racing in HK with administrators, trainers, jockeys and horses all making valuable contributions. It is clear this role

will continue in the unique landscape that is HK racing.

Player believes the prevalence of the Australian horse in HK is more to do with their suitability to the racing styles than any cost considerations. Hong Kong owners import horses from all major breeding regions and the three best sprinters of recent times in HK are all Australian-bred.

Silent Witness (El Moxie-Jade Tiara by Bureaucracy) was bred by Ian Smith of Edinburgh Stud in NSW and sold as a yearling for \$55,000 to John Foote (as agent) at the 2001 Inglis Classic sale in Sydney. His price was a decent sum considering the closest black type in his family (apart from his dam's Listed fourth placing) is his Gr3-placed 3rd dam and Gr1 winning 4th dam.

Imported to HK as an unraced horse, he first raced as an early 3YO winning all five starts in the 2002/03 season. The next season he raced six times for six wins, all in Group company, including four at Gr1 level. He carried on his winning streak, having another six unbeaten starts in 2004/05. This tally of 17 wins in a row eclipsed the US record of 16 set by Cigar and is only 2 behind the modern record of 19 held in conjunction by Gloaming (AUS) and Desert Gold (NZ). Twice voted Horse of the Year, Aust-bred Silent Witness was the first HK-trained horse to top the international sprint ratings.

Absolute Champion (Marauding-Beauty Belle by Ideal Planet) - winner of the Gr1 HK Sprint of 2006 and the world's top ranked sprinter in 2006/07 - was bred by Newhaven's Kelly family in NSW and is from the family of weight-for-age Gr1 star Grand Arnee (Hennessy-Tambour by Marauding). Racing as Genius and Evil in



The 2007 sale-topping Flying Spur colt



Sacred Kingdom has developed a cult following

Australia, he won the STC Pago Pago Stakes as a 2YO before being purchased privately and exported to HK. Unlike Silent Witness, his career in HK started slowly with one win in each of his first two seasons there. Nonetheless, in his second season in Hong Kong, he was rated good enough by his trainer to race in the 2005 Gr1 HK Sprint where he finished 7th to fellow Australian Natural Blitz (by Maroof).

The race record of Absolute Champion reads like a horse who improves each season until he's the world's best. In 2006/07, he raced exclusively in Group company, winning fresh-up in the Gr3 HSBC Premier Bowl (1200m). Next up he took on an exceptional field in the Gr1 HK Sprint and led in an Australian quinella of Absolute Champion and Silent Witness. But time tells a story, and Absolute Champion's figures of 1:07.8

set a new track record, with the son of Marauding crossing the line 4.5 lengths clear of Silent Witness. To prove it wasn't a fluke, Absolute Champion followed this with a strong second to Scintillation in the Gr1 Centenary Sprint Cup, and a win in the Gr1 Chairman's Sprint Prize. He ended the sea-

### "Aust-bred Absolute Champion ended the season as highest rated sprinter in the world."

son as the highest rated sprinter in the world.

In the just completed HK season, Absolute Champion has scored a win in the Gr1 Centenary Sprint Cup, and seconds in the Gr1 HK Sprint and the Gr1 Chairman's

Sprint Prize (both to Sacred Kingdom). Unfortunately he was fatally injured in the Gr1 KrisFlyer International Sprint in Singapore, thus ending a brilliant career.

Sacred Kingdom (Encosta de Lago-Courtroom Sweetie by Zeditave) was imported to Hong Kong in March 2006. Bred by Mrs NF Calvert, Est Late A M Calvert in Victoria, he was purchased as a yearling by his current trainer for \$200,000 at the 2005 Inglis Premier Sale in Melbourne and named Jumbo Star in Australia. He is from a solid family with his winning dam being a full-sister to VRC Edward Manifold S Gr2 winner Love of Mary (Zeditave-Morlin Maid).

Imported to HK as an unraced late 3YO, the locals must have thought they'd uncovered another Silent Witness as he won his first five starts in 2006/07. His final start of the season was his first in Group company, where he ran fourth over 1200m. Meanwhile, this past season has seen him grow and improve, with his seven starts yielding five wins (two of those in Gr1 races including the International Gr1 Hong Kong Sprint). As the current sprinting star of HK, big things are expected next season. 🐎

#### HONG KONG JOCKEY PREMIERSHIP 2007-08 SEASON

Jockey	Wins
D Whyte	111
B Prebble	83
F Coetsee	49
D Beadman	48
Y T Cheng	42
G Mosse	38
H W Lai	37
O Doleuze	36
G Boss	32
K L Chui	34
Z Purton	29
K T Yeung	25
C W Wong	20
E Saint-Martin	20
C Soumillon	18

#### HONG KONG TRAINERS PREMIERSHIP 2007-08 SEASON

Trainer	Wins
J Size	68
C Fownes	55
Y S Tsui	51
J Moore	47
A S Cruz	45
C H Yip	43
D E Ferraris	42
D J Hall	40
A Lee	40
P F Yui	37
A T Millard	29
K L Man	27
P O'Sullivan	27
A Schutz	24
K W Lui	23

#### Australian David Hayes trained in HK for 10 years from 1996-2005.

He commented: "Racing in Asia is vibrant and exciting, being a highly competitive world racing arena. HK in particular is in the international spotlight. The facilities in HK are first class, making it a dream place to train, while race meetings are highly organised and attract large and enthusiastic crowds."

