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THE ONE THAT DIDN'T GET AWAY

words by DANNY POWER



DAMON GABBEDY (LEFT) AT THE SALES WITH ANTHONY FREEDMAN
photography by FREEDMAN.COM.AU

Damon Gabbedy has bought and sold a healthy handful of Group 1 winners - Encosta De Lago is one important Gabbedy-bought star who comes to mind.

Yesterday's Group 1 Toorak Handicap (1600m, Caulfield) winner Solzhenitsyn would have joined Gabbedy's "bought and sold" bunch had it not been for a poor veterinary report.

Gabbedy and good friend and fellow bloodstock agent Paul Willetts specked Solzhenitsyn as a weanling for only NZ\$10,000 - "he was a good type with no pedigree," he said.

Gabbedy said the plan was to make the youngster a "trade horse", and everything was on plan when the gelding won his fourth start at Avondale in April 2010. "Everything was going to plan. He won his maiden and we had a good offer for him to go to Hong Kong ... but he failed the vet."

With the sale plans shelved, the decision was made to race Solzhenitsyn, and after two wins at Ellerslie late in 2010, the gelding was moved to trainer Robert Heathcote in Brisbane.

Today at Caulfield, the horse with the poor pedigree and the wonky vet report ran over the top of a classy field, including the great More Joyous, to win the Toorak Handicap.

Gabbedy, who trades as Belmont Bloodstock, usually is congratulating clients for their success, relished being on the receiving end of the back slappers. Not that he hasn't been involved in handy racehorses in the past.

His family owned the classy sprinter Storaia, who would have won a Group 1 Newmarket Handicap (1200m, Flemington) if it wasn't for stablemate Schilliaci.

The win capped a great day for Heathcote, who also trained Buffering to win the Group 2 Schilliaci Stakes (1000m).

More Joyous was game with her 60kg, 8kg more than Solzhenitsyn, but the effort of racing wide near the pace cost her in the end. She finished fourth, just ahead of last year's winner King Mufhasa.

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