

Rocket, Percheron Gelding 1980-2006.



Rocket began his vaulting career in 1986, with the members of West Pennant Hills Pony Club, after disgracing himself in his previous vocation as a carriage horse at The Rocks. It is alleged that a rat ran up his leg, I never did get a blow by blow description of the damage, but he never got to travel under the Sydney Harbour Bridge again.

The pony club began operating from Tall Timbers Kellyville when the development in WPH Valley took over their grounds. Some of the Riding for the Disabled (RDA) horses, such as Peter Pan, joined in the pony club activities. Rocket was used in RDA classes for the riders from McCall Gardens and for various other riders where a larger horse was suitable. It was a very innovative time within RDA where riders and horses were able to have some serious fun.

Vaulters from other pony clubs, such as Hills District, Glenorie, and McDonald Valley joined in the vaulting training sessions, and since one of the pony club coaches was also an RDA coach, riders from RDA also came to the Tuesday evening classes. Rocket was the backbone of a truly integrated sport where kids of all abilities got to train and compete together.

Rocket's first TV appearance was on "Wombat" where he showcased vaulting and the WPH Pony Club team. Many invitations were received to give displays at Agricultural Shows, Field Days and the Royal Easter Show, on behalf of Pony Club and RDA. It was around this time that the team became known as Sydney Vaulting Group. RDA Open Day's in August was a must on his calendar, and His Royal Performance at the opening of the Box Hill centre, in front of Princess Anne, was the pinnacle of his career.

His competitive career began in 1993 with the first National Vaulting Championships held at Tall Timbers, Kellyville. Vaulters from Queensland, SA and WA attended the competition, which also included a two day clinic. Rocket was used for all levels of vaulters and competed at trot in some of the events.

Since that time Rocket attended all State Championships up to 2002, and most National Championships, including a trip to South Australia.

Rocket created an impact wherever he went, in a fashion that only Rocket could achieve. One such incident was in Canberra, when happily in his yard he decided to put his head thru the gate and scratch his neck. He discovered that the gates were just slipped on to their hinges from above, and Rocket was able to wander off around the property wearing his stable gate like a picture frame. Fortunately he had escaped with his halter attached to his gate, making a very easy return to the yard. Much tying up of gates was done in future.

On another occasion Rocket managed to take his handler "skiing" thru a lucerne patch whilst en route to the National Championships in Wagga Wagga. He was overcome with the smell and just ran into the middle of the crop, before putting his head down and scoffing the feed. It took two to drag him back when we realized that it wasn't the best idea to try to load him onto the float next to such a tempting fodder.

In his later years, he attended all competitions at RDA up and including April 2005, after which he retired from competition. Rocket was well known for his mad minute, whereby his warm up routine would

religiously include two or three good bucks. This was often quite off-putting for new vaulters, but once the side reins went on and a vaulter on his back, he was always a gentle giant, unless provoked by the occasional sharp knee of a vaulter.

It was during the last winter that he was retired from training and Rocket was fortunate enough to enjoy his short retirement, from his paddock with the best view at RDA.

