

The Legend of Rapid Action (aka ERNIE)



On 03 November 1993, a small, chestnut colt took his first wobbly steps into the world of horseracing. Born with an exceptional bloodline (Dam: Saarostasia, Sire: Tristaplane NZ) he was selected by the legendary Bart Cummings and trained for the track.

That wobbly stance soon gave way to a lightning gait and the young colt earned the name '*Rapid Action*'

Over a period of eleven years, *Rapid Action* won **eleven races** and a total (in winnings) of **\$99 625**.

He retired at age eleven and was 'put out to pasture' at his owner's home in the Yarra Valley.

Dubbed 'Ernie', the retired racer lived a relatively peaceful life for a number of years.

One clear September day, a young girl 'free leased' the chestnut, as the owner believed that it would be beneficial for Ernie to be regularly worked and handled again.

Sadly, this was not the case.

Sometime later, a friend of the owner's happened to drive past Ernie's paddock (unknown to him) and saw a ragged, lean, bony beast standing in mud with a rug wrapped around his neck - almost strangling him. Due to the position of the rug, a white 'apple' birthmark was revealed on the horse's rump, identifying him as Ernie.

On hearing of Ernie's demise, the owner immediately stepped in and reclaimed his horse. Due to the fact that the rug had *never been removed*, the buckle had embedded itself into Ernie's chest and his skin had grown over it, causing intense pain. The rug had to be 'surgically' removed and Ernie bears the scars on his chest to this day.

Shortly after his return to his owner's paddocks, a firestorm (Black Saturday, Feb 2009) swept through the region and destroyed many properties.

Ernie survived (albeit with burnt feet) and was relocated into a small yard.

Tragically, the stress of the fires proved too much for Ernie's owner and he died shortly afterwards, of a brain aneurysm.

We were called upon to rescue as many of the horses as possible, as they were to be euthanized due to their injuries and trauma.

We successfully rehomed two horses, but sadly the others were beyond our medical capabilities and time frame. We were given two days to act.

Ernie arrived at our "bushfire sanctuary" (where he resides now) bedraggled and with dreadlocked mane. His legs were swollen, his hooves seeping with fluid and a frightened manner prevented us from getting too close to him (originally).

Ernie had multiple abscesses on his hooves – one on the back and two in the front. He had to endure injections of antibiotics, wear special boots and have his feet bandaged and cleaned twice a day for a considerable amount of time.

It has taken years of care to restore his hooves to a healthy state.

However, the horse with the heart the size of Uluru still welcomes you onto his back and is clearly very, very grateful to his human carer's.

Ernie is an extremely loyal, affectionate, loving, noble and generous soul. There is nothing that he would not do for us, and nothing that we would not do for him. He has become family – and I personally don't care if I ride him or not.

I feel privileged to merely love him and be in his presence.

He is a symbol of triumph over hardship.

He has experienced great victory and fame, as well as crushing defeat, cruelty and neglect.

He has walked on coals and laid his heart bare.

And last, but not least, he has finally come home.