

Archie's life: born to ride

By Peter Foley

Enthusiasm radiates from Archie McColm. He loves everything about racing - the speed, the attention he gets, but, above all, the connection with horses.

The 17-year-old apprentice is one of racing's hottest prospects, but he is no flash in the pan: his love of horses runs deep.

Archie is apprenticed to his father, David McColm, who was apprenticed to Ipswich trainer Kevin Keidge in the late 70s and early 80s before becoming a trainer.

David moved to Murwillumbah 30 years ago, where his stable star was \$2.3 million earner Far Too Easy, a horse Archie strapped before the family relocated to the Gold Coast last year.

Archie debuted at Nanango on April 4, winning at his third start. His tally so far is 35 at a 17 per cent strike rate, highlighted by victory aboard Golden Cross in the Murwillumbah Cup on August 21.

Polite, energetic, quick with a smile and comfortable with interviews, Archie is ready for everything racing can throw at him.

"I wanted to be a jockey my whole life, so I've always been in the game, and that's probably where the expectation came from," Archie said.

"I'm more grateful that I've got all the expectation on me, to be honest. I prefer to have all the eyes on me than none."

Archie's racing story started in Murwillumbah where his family lived next to a dairy.

"My dad has trained for a long time, and I always grew up with horses," he said.

"I used to work in the dairy and rounded up cows. That was my dream; I really loved that. I started riding in a stock saddle.

"That's where the first passion came from, I reckon. I really just love being around the animal and connecting with them. The nicer you are to the animal, the more they'll give to you."

By the time he was eight, Archie had moved into a jockey saddle. He has barely been out of one since.

For all the excitement around his early success, he is clear-eyed about the demands of the profession.

"Being a jockey is second to none. It's a really hard industry to be in. Not only do you have to be 100 per cent on the day, some people have to lose weight, and it's just not easy," he said.

"Sometimes you can't have a clear head because you're losing weight, but that's what we're in it for, and you really have to love the game.

"I was always obsessed with the animal, and I always thought that I could be a jockey, and that's all I really knew, to be honest."

David McColm was at Ipswich last Thursday as Archie added a provincial double to his resume: Medals in race two and Snitzstream in the fifth.

"We've had a bit of an epiphany here today, because I've ridden winners here and now so has Archie," David said.

"Archie, from a very young age, has lived and breathed racing. He just loves it. Every day, the TV's on; he watches replays; sometimes he sends us round the twist - but we put up with it," he added.



Constant Café (second from left) is about to pounce on the home turn in the Precinct Urban Planning Handicap (1350m). The Paula Barron-trained mare, ridden by star apprentice Bella Youngberry, won by more than a length. (Peter Foley)

ed with a laugh.

"Racing is not an easy game. It certainly has its trials and tribulations. But I've had bad times, and he's seen that. We've also had some really good times, and he's been a big part of that as well.

"He's really mature for his age, Archie; so I think he accepts it for what it is."

David said he and his wife June were proud of Archie, both as a person and as the rider he was becoming.

"It's easy for a father to say that about his son, but he's a good kid and he's been well received by other trainers," he said.

"We never thought he'd be as advanced as what he is, but he deserves it because he works hard.

"He's the full package, Archie. He sells himself really well. And he's got ability and I think the future is bright for him.

"Because of what racing is, his mum and I want to see him be safe.

"I just want to see him be the best that he can possibly be."



Medals, (centre, with Archie McColm aboard), races to victory in the Barrier Reef Pools Benchmark 65 (800m). "As soon as he jumped super, I was filled with confidence," Archie said. (Trackside Photography)



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