

## Bella's real skill in saddle

By Peter Foley

Bella Youngberry argues she isn't a spoiled brat, but she does admit to being spoiled. In a good way, mind you.

She recognises the advantages she's been given and is backing them up with hard work, determined to pay back her parents and supporters for their sacrifice.

Here's how this played out in our interview: I hear you are obsessed with horses. Can you remember the first time you saw a horse?

"I think it went a little bit like Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory: 'Daddy, I want a pony please,'" Bella said lightly.

Wait a minute, don't take this the wrong way, but you sound like a spoiled brat.

"No, I'm not a spoiled brat," she said, calmly, "I think I'm very spoiled. But brat? No."

Bella Youngberry has quickly risen through the ranks of apprentice jockeys in Queensland and is second in the provincial title with 24 winners, just behind Leah Martyn.

Bella graduated from pony club and show jumping to working at a stable and riding trackwork.

Trainer and former jockey Allan Chau has been a key influence, along with senior riders

Boris Thornton and Sam Collett and ex-jockey Robbie Fradd.

Bella was apprenticed to Allan Chau at the Gold Coast when she started in 2024. She eventually found her way to Adam Campton's barn at the Gold Coast.

Recognising their daughter's love of horses was permanent, Bella and her dad and mum had moved to a property big enough for her dream to flourish.

"My family are obviously my biggest supporters," she said. "We were a beachy and boating family so for dad to move out to a property for me, that makes me very spoiled, yes," she said.

"It's going to make me always grateful for the opportunities I've had; I always sit down with mum and dad and go, 'Oh, my God, in the last few years, look how far I've come.'"

"I mean, it was only a few years ago I was learning to ride trackwork, and a few years before that, I was learning to ride show jumpers."

Bella's dad Garry Youngberry is the Channel 9 Queensland weather presenter. He has cheerfully had to learn some humility as his daughter's star has risen.

"I'm not Gary the weatherman anymore, I'm Bella's dad and I love that. Everywhere I go, people want to talk to her," said Garry, who manages Bella with Adam Campton.

Bella is glad the tables have turned.

"I remember being a bit younger, and everyone was saying to me, 'Is your dad the weatherman?' and I would always say: 'When is it my turn?'" she said.

"But now people go to him. 'Are you Bella's dad? and it's his turn. He says, 'All they want to do is talk about you.' So, it's funny to get a bit of payback."



Naughty Neil (centre) thunders from the back of the field to win. (Trackside Photography)

Horse racing has a lot of fluctuating fortunes and Bella says family, friends and supporters have also helped her manage that harsh reality.

"Racing is definitely a big roller coaster," she said. "I have gone through my ups and downs - injuries and things like that - and the lows feel pretty low, but the highs make it worth it."

"Having that family - I'm so grateful - they pick me up, they sacrifice so much time to be with me and to support me," she said.

"If you're lucky to walk away with a winner, you look back on the week and go, 'Wow, I was so tired this morning, but now I'm pumped because all the hard work paid off.'"

While she loves riding winners for her master, a pinch-me moment has been riding for high profile trainers such as Tony Gollan and Ciaran Maher.

Last Saturday at Ipswich, with Dad trackside, Bella won on Naughty Neil, trained by Chris Munce and his son Corey.

"I see Muncey (Chris) as a trainer when I take instructions from him, but I do see him as one of the great jockeys, because he's always only a phone call away (to give riding advice).

"So, I see him equally as trainer and jockey. He's one of the GOATS."

When it comes to dreams, the Melbourne Cup is on top of her wish list.



Bella Youngberry and Naughty Neil return proudly to the mounting enclosure.

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