

**June 11 2015**  
**For immediate release**

### **Passing of Bonecrusher**

It is with great sadness that the Mitchell family (owners) and the Ritchie family (trainers) announce the passing of the people's champion, Bonecrusher, in his thirty-third year.

He has been humanely euthanized after contracting Laminitis (the same hoof disease that caused the death of the champion mare, Sunline). The best specialist veterinary advice was that his condition was incurable and would result in a total loss of quality of life.

Bonecrusher has been cared for in his retirement by Shirley Mitchell and his longevity is a credit to her.

Bonecrusher will forever be part of Australasian racing folklaw. Not since the great Phar Lap, who was also a striking Chestnut, has a horse captured the imagination of the Australasian racing public. Who will ever forget the "Race of the Century" and Bill Collin's famous call when Bonecrusher raced into equine immortality with his victory over Waverley Star in the 1986 Cox Plate.

He was the first thoroughbred to earn a million dollars in New Zealand, achieving that milestone at the age of three. He won races from seemingly impossible positions often by a slender margin with his guts and determination carrying him to the line.

He was ridden in all but one of his wins by Gary Stewart, a jockey who grew another leg, when he piloted the "Crusher".

What Bonecrusher did in his three and four year old seasons had never been done before in Australasia and is likely to never be repeated. As a three year old he won seven consecutive races, including the New Zealand Derby, Air New Zealand Stakes, Tancred Stakes and the AJC Derby. As a four year old he won five races including four Australian group ones being the Underwood Stakes, Caulfield Stakes, Cox Plate and Australian Cup.

In his career he won nine group one races and a total of eighteen races in all winning from 880 metres to 2400 metres with all but three of his wins being group or listed races. His total earnings were almost NZD \$3,000,000.00

Had he not been struck down by a severe virus in Japan in late 1986, which almost claimed his life, his record would surely have been incomparable. Although he was never quite the same he still continued to win group ones producing a mighty effort to catch the Melbourne Cup winner and Northern Hemisphere Stallion At Talaq in the Australasian Cup and went on to defeat Horlicks in the 1988 Air New Zealand Stakes.

Bonecrusher changed the lives of the Mitchell and Ritchie families. In his retirement they wished to give back to the racing public and gladly accepted invitations for him to be seen by his adoring fans. He travelled throughout New Zealand and Australia leading out Derbies, the Golden Slipper and Melbourne Cup fields and returning to Moonee Valley, the scene of his greatest triumph.

In 1986 he was made a sports ambassador for New Zealand alongside such greats as Dame Susan Devoy and canoeist Ian Ferguson with Mike Moore, the then Minister for

Recreation and Sport, stating *“he is the kind of Kiwi many of us want to be; strong, fast, good looking, fiercely competitive, thoroughly professional and a millionaire at three”*.

He also had a song named after him “Tribute to a Champion” which raised funds for child cancer and received considerable radio air play in the late 1980’s.

His final resting place will be at New Zealand’s premier racecourse Ellerslie where a memorial will be erected in his honour.

Any media requests for interviews should be directed to Frank Ritchie phone 027 471 8840 or email [rrstables@xtra.co.nz](mailto:rrstables@xtra.co.nz). It would be helpful if this could be done on Thursday or Friday of this week as Frank is travelling to Australia on Saturday morning.

The Mitchell family request that you kindly respect their need for privacy at this difficult time.