

# Teen veterans step up to the plate

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# This one's for Bill



Trainer David Cousins pays tribute to his late father after yesterday's Devonport Cup win. Picture: PETER LORD

By TERRY MORRIS

THE Devonport Cup was on its way to heaven yesterday when trainer David Cousins pointed skywards.

No words were needed when Cousins blessed Lunardi's Devonport Cup victory to the memory of his father, Bill, who died last week.

Never has there been a more poignant or emotional atmosphere in the 89-year history of the Devonport Cup than when Lunardi came from last to win.

Lunardi raced in the blue, red and gold silks of Bill Cousins, who was buried a week ago; the gelding is part-owned by his two sons, David and Michael; and his 21-year-old granddaughter Malinda Hicks welcomed back the winner in her sash as Miss Devonport Cup.

Michael Cousins made sure of a good luck charm by wearing his late father's blue shirt and dark pants to help will Lunardi past the post.

"I know this is a special win for all the connections and I want to thank the crowd for the great reception I received coming back to scale," winning jockey Brendon McCoull said.

Lunardi (\$15) provided McCoull with his second win in the Devonport Cup in the space of three years when he stormed home to beat early leader Conquering (\$6.80) and Saval Prince (\$30).

There was hardly a dry eye among the 9500 crowd when the significance of the Lunardi victory descended on them.

Yells of "good on ya Crockett" resounded around the mounting yard in reference to the trainer who has carried the Davy Crockett moniker for most of his life.

Hugs and backslaps continued for a quarter of an hour before connections were hurried away for the Cup presentations.

David and Michael Cousins paid \$2000 for Lunardi in a package deal almost two years ago and only a few weeks ago knocked back a Victorian offer of \$35,000 for him.

Their desire was to get the six-year-old to the Devonport Cup in the hope that their father could fight his battle with cancer long enough to see it. "It wasn't to be, but what more can you say about this?" David Cousins said.

## Devonport Cup win dedicated to father

Cousins, 55, is not only Lunardi's trainer but is also the six-year-old's regular trackwork rider and for the past fortnight has given him around-the-clock treatment to help him recover from a leg injury.

"He knocked his leg at Mowbray in the Tasmanian Stakes on Boxing Day and we've worked him overtime to get him fit for the Cup," David Cousins said.

The Cousins brothers race Lunardi in partnership with Ulverstone's Greg Ling, and they will now look towards the \$400,000 Hobart Cup at Elwick on February 11.

"We'll have to wait and see how he pulls up but he's nominated for the Hobart Cup and that's the way we're likely to go," the trainer said.

Cousins paid tribute to local veterinarians Bob Clippingdale and Adam Richardson for helping get Lunardi to the post.

"I'm indebted to both of them for the work they have done in keeping the horse on his feet since Boxing Day," he said.

Stewards opened an inquiry into the performance of beaten Victorian favourite Curreege, who struggled into ninth place.

Stewards said Curreege had jumped awkwardly and had to settle near the rear of the field and was then left flat-footed when the pace came on later in the race.

They also heard a protest lodged by fourth placegetter Justin Hamer (Browneyed Boy) against Martin Dolendo, who finished third on Saval Prince.

Stewards ruled that Hamer had tried to take a run when there wasn't sufficient room, and the protest was dismissed.

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## India's cricketers are keen to get back to business

CANBERRA — India's cricketers arrived in Canberra yesterday — two days late but keen to get on to the field again after political posturing had threatened to put an end to the tour.

Indian captain Anil Kumble had accused the Australians of not playing in the "spirit of the game" in last week's second Test in Sydney, where the home side took a 2-0 lead in the four-match series.

India successfully lobbied for West Indian umpire Steve Bucknor to be sacked from next week's third Test in Perth.

And Indian spinner Harbhajan Singh is free to play in Perth pending an appeal against his three-Test ban for racially abusing Australia's Andrew Symonds.

An appeal date has yet to be set and it is possible it will be held over until after the match.

The ICC announced last night that New Zealand High Court judge John Hansen would hear the case.

Kumble said it was great to be back playing cricket again, but the threat of another "suspension" of India's Australian tour still hangs in the air if Harbhajan's appeal fails.

Kumble said he had asked Australian skipper Ricky Ponting to have the

Harbhajan-Symonds issue discussed informally, without making an official complaint to the ICC match referee Mike Procter. But Ponting had said his hands were tied because he had already reported the incident.

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