



Tania Hay's CONSEQUENCE, aka "The Red Mare" Photo: Bernie Saunders

# From Tassie to the top... meet Australian showie Tania Hay

Words: Samantha Watston

Tasmanian rider, Tania Hay has cemented her place in Australian showing history with a record three wins in the prestigious Barastoc Horse of the Year Show with her magnificent thoroughbred mare Consequence. Not one to rest on her laurels, Tania – refreshingly down to earth and adoring her horses, win or lose – chats to Samantha Watson.

**SHOW/CIRCUIT:** Do you come from an equestrian background?

**Tania Hay:** Not really. Mum's father was an old fashioned blacksmith and Dad's father dabbled in training racehorses, so I guess I got the horse gene. No one else in the family is remotely interested in the chaff bandits.

**SHOW/CIRCUIT:** When did you start riding?

**Tania Hay:** When I was three – I guess, like so many other parents, Mum and Dad got sick of my constant pleading and whining about "horsey, horsey," and it went from there. As you can imagine, I spent more time on the ground than I did on the horse! No such thing as leading rein in those days!

However, Mum and Dad did the right thing and, when I was seven, found an instructor for me, so eventually the ground and I stopped meeting so up close and personal!

**SHOW/CIRCUIT:** Can you remember your first pony or what made you want to start riding?

**Tania Hay:** My first pony was a black gelding named Midnight, complete with Roman nose and hogged mane. Naturally I thought he was beautiful; my friends thought less so. He taught me lots; he was a bit of a pig to deal with...but aren't all black, Roman-nosed, hogged mane ponies anyway?

**SHOW/CIRCUIT:** Why the show ring?

**Tania Hay:** I used to show as a kid ...the big Ag shows, the Royals...there were many shows in those days. There was the show ring as well as the jumps ring and games. We did the lot! As a teenager, I drifted more toward jumping and when I was in my twenties, turned to eventing. However, the slow pretty ones kept luring me back and after a few painful, fairly serious falls, it was time to put the jumping gear away, and I went back to showing.

That was over 20 years ago and I am having as much fun now with the slow, pretty ones as I had in the beginning. I am addicted to the preparation, the constant striving for success and satisfaction gained from being happy with my horses.

**SHOW/CIRCUIT:** What does a day in the life of Tania Hay involve? Do you ride full time?

**Tania Hay:** Alas, I can't ride full time. I am a full time shift worker which does allow me more time to ride. My horses are all boxed at night and out during the day. I am lucky that my shifts commence either very early or very late, so I can fit my horses in and ride around my work.

I also school and train other horses for clients, but must limit how many due to my workload. In addition to this, I stand a Riding Pony stallion.

**SHOW/CIRCUIT:** What has been the highlight of your show ring career so far – three Barastoc titles is hard to top?

**Tania Hay:** Yes, I guess winning Barastoc three times running, and winning the International Challenge is pretty hard to top. However, winning the Pritchard Spaulding best Lightweight Hack at Hobart Royal Show with Consequence in 2006 was also very special. She was only a baby in her first season and competed at the Royal in a snaffle. In addition to this, she went reserve hack and I could see that she certainly had the makings of being very successful. Being runner-up National Hack of the Year 2009 was also a huge thrill. For a horse from Tasmania to come home with that is something else, but the biggest highlight of all, is the knowledge that the mare is mine and she's in my stable!

**SHOW/CIRCUIT:** Tell me about Consequence, is she an easy mare or does the chestnut mare connotation ring true?

**Tania Hay:** 'Red Mare,' as she is called at home is, on the ground, the quietest mare you would ever find. However, occasionally under saddle, she can get herself in a jam. When that happens you literally let it happen, then ask her to get on with the job. You cannot demand from her – you ask! She's a very polite mare to ride but, like many chestnut mares, does have her sticky moments, which thankfully, she is more prone to in the indoor school at home, rather than at a big event. She detests Shetland ponies and if she lays eyes on one, I am very quick to head her the other way! If I don't, she will most definitely do it for me!

**SHOW/CIRCUIT:** Other successful show horses you have owned?

**Tania Hay:** Gainsborough was a very successful hack I had in the early 90's to the early 2000's. He took me many places: the Nationals, Melbourne Royal etc. He won everything in Tasmania and took many junior riders to wins, as he was the ultimate riding class mount. He is retired here with me now as a 26-year-old with hardly any teeth.

Alinda Park Make Sure is a galloway I bred and he has also won Barastoc, reserve champion at Melbourne and Canberra Royals, won at Sydney Royal and everything here in Tasmania. He started under saddle in 1999 and I sold him on in 2007 to a family in Queensland.

I truly have had many successful horses – too many to bore you with – but those two have been my recent horses before Consequence. I also had two hunters, a galloway and a hack, which had many good wins before I sold them on.

**SHOW/CIRCUIT:** What is the best tip you can offer to others when competing?

**Tania Hay:** Focus – on yourself and your horse and what you can achieve. It is NOT all about winning; it's about good horses, good friends and good showing. That doesn't mean always bringing home the fat sashes! Don't be disappointed about a result. Be happy with what you or your horse put in. If it wasn't good enough today, tomorrow is another day and a day for improvement.

**SHOW/CIRCUIT:** Do you have any tips for people new to showing?

**Tania Hay:** Approach some of the older, experienced competitors who have been showing for years. Ask us for advice or help. Many people coming into showing are frightened to ask the older ones, possibly thinking we are above them. We most certainly are NOT

above you. We had to start somewhere too! I would hate to take all my knowledge and experience to my grave without sharing it. So, all you new showies, ask the older ones. You may be surprised at how the top level people are more than happy to give you a hint or provide advice.

**SHOW/CIRCUIT:** Best and worst thing about showing?

**Tania Hay:** The best is the horses; the worst some of the people are.

**SHOW/CIRCUIT:** How do you think the politics of the show ring could be improved?

**Tania Hay:** It's a subjective sport. We have to strive to make it more transparent. Granted, not all of us like the same type of horse, which is what makes it exciting, but it is important always to remember there is another show and another judge next week. Due to the subjective nature of the sport, we will always have sideline judges regardless.

**SHOW/CIRCUIT:** What are you looking for when you judge? What appeals to you?

**Tania Hay:** Star quality first and foremost. Straight legs and conformation which 'fits'. I love a horse which is exciting to watch and looks like it is going to 'blow' any minute – that's star quality!

**SHOW/CIRCUIT:** Tell us about the horses you currently have in your stables, apart from Consequence?

**Tania Hay:** I have just purchased another big Thoroughbred off the track with Josh Clark, and he is going to be very exciting. We have named him Intrepid, and he will come out in 2012 as a newcomer. He is a beautiful horse and, as with all my horses, will receive a good,

CONSEQUENCE - Champion Saddle Hack and Supreme Ridden Show Horse Launceston Royal 2009. Photo: David Smith

solid grounding without being rushed.

Dreamtime Vogue is a lovely small black hack, purchased from Julie Conti at Dreamtime Stud, and I have a galloway coming from Donlea Stud in South Australia in late January, both of which will be newcomers.

**SHOW/CIRCUIT:** What do you look for when purchasing a horse for yourself?

**Tania Hay:** Star quality, clean legs, straight movement, conformation and then temperament. I don't mind a bit of "hotness" in my horses; as long as they have all my pre-requisites, I can deal with a little naughtiness and smartness. Many look for temperament first, and that's fine, but I go the other way. I need that star factor first. I can work with the rest later. I don't rush my newcomers. It may take me two years to get them out, so I ensure I have all my work established which I feel then ensures temperament.

**SHOW/CIRCUIT:** Which have been your favourite horses of all time and why?

**Tania Hay:** The galloway, Lost Lady. I loved her star quality, movement and her 'hotness'

**SHOW/CIRCUIT:** Do you have a sponsor? What does this mean for you?

**Tania Hay:** I have Champions Choice Browbands as a sponsor, which means a lot to me as Amie has recognised that my horse can assist her business and has helped me immensely with choice of browbands for the mare!

**SHOW/CIRCUIT:** Other interests?

**Tania Hay:** Reading when I have time, which isn't often! I love my Japanese bobtail cats for their quirkiness and clannish behaviour; such fun cats to have around. I have three JBT's and have just ordered two more from a breeder in NSW to arrive in late February.

**SHOW/CIRCUIT:** What do you do in your downtime?

**Tania Hay:** What's downtime? I do an awful lot of work on the computer as I am the EA Tasmania Show Horse president. We are responsible for running Tasmania's Horse of the Year Show, clinics, shows, organising the national team and all the rest that is part and parcel of such a role – it's half another full time job in itself!

**SHOW/CIRCUIT:** What achievements and goals would you still like to achieve?

**Tania Hay:** My horses have given me so much and achieved more for me than I ever thought possible. They have all taken me places I never thought I would go, so I am more than happy with what I have achieved. I believe to ride is to achieve. Each horse improves the next one that comes along, so I am always achieving at that. If I had to choose a 'win' achievement, then I would like to win the National Show Hack Title with Consequence, because she deserves it. I only ever want people to recognise her and her talents. It's not about me, it's for her.