

# CHRIS CHUGG SHOW/CIRCUIT EXCLUSIVE...

WORDS: DEBBIE KNOWLES



**What a treat to have Chris Chugg in New Zealand and, not just riding at our Horse of the Year Show but back for coaching riders in August... an opportunity for those lucky enough to partake of this man's brilliant abilities.**

If you haven't heard of this Australian Show Jumper, here's a VERY brief list of just some of **Chris Chugg's** achievements: Australian National Champion four times, twice represented Australia at the World Cup finals, member of Winning Nations Cup Team in Europe, winner and place getter in European Grand Prix and World Cup events, winner of THIRTY THREE World Cup qualifiers with ELEVEN different horses (I'd like to repeat THAT!), three time winner of the Australian World Cup League, his mount DIAMOND B EGO was three times winner of the Golden Grand award for leading World Cup horse of the season, Chris has been a member of the NSWIS Elite Squad since its inception and he is currently on the National Elite list with VIVANT.

If Chris needed bringing down to earth after reading his above credentials (and he certainly doesn't) he'd be ably assisted by his wife Helen, Diamond B Farm Manager and computer operator since Chris openly admits to being "computer illiterate." Helen says she often directs him to the "boys toys," which he professes to enjoy, for menial tasks such as arena maintenance, hay feeding and, apparently, organising dinner! (He is now my hero...). Given some time away from the horses, Chris enjoys water skiing. How he finds "time" for any time off is beyond me as he and Helen also provide a Consultation Service for the purchase of horses from overseas – both breeding and riding stock. They have built up, over the years, a number of great international contacts for quality young horses for the show jumping sport in conjunction with Australian Sport Horse Breeders.

The Chugg's live on Diamond B Stud, Hawkesbury Valley, about 60km North West of Sydney and it's a big equestrian and racing area. The property itself is 30 acres in size with Currency Creek along its boundary. With its abundance of mature shade trees, it is a quiet and peaceful environment. The wonderful facilities for both stud and riding horses include - well maintained post and rail, electrified, grassy paddocks with individual shelter sheds, sand arena for flat work of 60x30m with lights plus a sand jumping arena of 90x70m with a full set of show jumps. The arenas and paddocks can be irrigated from a million litre capacity dam. There's also a 20m circumference 'free walker,' a 20m sand round yard, breeding crush and foaling down yards, 8 barn 'Porta-Stall' stable block and a separate 'clients' tack room.

Amanda Madigan is an extremely valuable part of the Diamond B Team. Amanda also wears many hats for the Chugg's as a rider, trainer, foal wrangler, stable manager and is apparently revered around the stable as 'she who knows all'. Amanda has wins at World Cup level to her credit and is responsible for much of the early work on the team these days.

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To mention here Bev Edwards is to introduce the mother of Chris. Bev is no slouch herself when it comes to being a great rider and she is well known for competing and winning at top level dressage, especially on her imported Warmblood stallions which stand at Jaybee Farm in Queensland. She must be responsible for starting Chris on his first pony "Charlie" a black Section A Welsh when Chris was eight years old. Chris competed in eventing and dressage before turning solely to show jumping in the early 1980's.

I can remember seeing pictures, and being impressed then, of Chris Chugg on an amazing Warmblood stallion called SKY HIGH. This horse, along with his full-brother, SKIES ABOVE was originally imported from the United Kingdom into Australia by Chris Howe and SKY HIGH was then eventually acquired by Bev. Did she have dressage aspirations for this lovely horse and 'somehow' he ended up show jumping with Chris? Methinks there is another story there perhaps... SKY HIGH was a great competitor, winning the right to represent Australia at the World Cup final in 1987 and the following year won the Australian Show Jumping Championships. As a sire, he has produced World Cup competitors and was named Jumping Stallion of the Year in 2002.

The current Diamond B Show Jumping Team consists of the following horses:

**VIVANT:** his huge personality and intelligence, not to mention mega talent, has established him as one of the Chugg's all time favourites. He epitomizes the modern show jumping athlete - careful, brave, consistent and full of enthusiasm for life in general. His future looks bright and Helen and Chris feel very privileged to be able to share VIVANT'S journey to the top. He is owned by Australian Sport Horse Breeders and was chosen by the Chugg's in Belgium and imported as a three year old. What a horse - such talent, along with mega style. At time of going to press, VIVANT and Chris had just won BOTH World Cup rounds in Queensland making it three wins in a row this season so VIVANT now heads both the League and Leading Horse Awards.

**CONQUISTADOR:** a young horse of immense natural talent. Maybe this horse lives a little in VIVANT'S shadow but his quieter personality is nonetheless charming and endearing. Make no mistake; CONQUISTADOR'S time will come. Chris says "we just have to continue with his training and let him make the transition to a mature jumping athlete." Also owned by Australian Sport Horse breeders and imported from Belgium as a three year old.

**TP GIFTED:** Amanda's number one ride, GIFTED was imported in-utero and has been with the Chugg's since she was three years old - owned by Bev (Chris' Mother) and John Edwards. GIFTED is a 'quiet achiever' - maybe not as outwardly 'flashy' as the boys on the team but she is a very consistent and successful jumper. With futurity wins on her way to B Grade and Grand Prix wins, Gifted is a super competitor, always striving to be clean and always capable of a sizzling jump off. You have to admire jumpers like her that just want to do their job!

**DIAMOND B VERMONT:** from VIVANT'S first crop comes "Speedy." Out of SOUTHERN JESTER'S 7/8th sister, this boy is a real charmer. Very much a 'people horse' he has a quiet and intelligent nature, easy to train and shows a lot of talent. Jumping the 1.20's now and recently purchased by Jess Stalling.

**DIAMOND B VIGO:** also from VIVANT'S first crop and out of DIAMOND B EGO'S full sister so lots of emotional family connections here. Luckily this very tall mare exhibits all the good attributes of her illustrious family- scope, style and intelligence. Vigo is currently C grade and we hold high hopes for her. Already a mother of ALTER EGO a grey colt by CONQUISTADOR'S father CLINTON. And yes, it is, of course, Chris' favourite foal of the 2006 season.

Interesting, up until two years ago, all the Diamond B Stud broodmares were by New Zealand Thoroughbred stallions or out of mares by an NZ stallion: FIERY JADE by MCGINTY, GOLD DUCHESS by QUEST FOR FAME and out of a ST HILARION mare - both successful bloodlines for Diamond B Stud, DIAMOND B BARBIE by KING TRISTRAM (by SIR TRISTRAM) and ALWAYS GRATEFUL by GROSVENOR. Sadly these wonderful Thoroughbred mares were sold to make way for their VIVANT daughters and so, Diamond B Stud progresses and improves its show jumping stock.

To describe some of Chris Chugg's successes as a show jumper, lets explore the Diamond B Stud's impressive Hall Of Fame:

**DIAMOND B EGO:** the tale of "Ego" has many long family connections - Chris and Helen first met while Helen was doing holiday work at the stables were Ego's mother, BUNDARRA was campaigned. Years later, they were able to purchase this lovely, hot, talented mare and bred three foals from her. The first SKYHIGH II, won World Cups and was listed for the 2000 Olympics, the second Ego, who would become their most successful Grand Prix horse and third, Ego's full sister, who replaced BUNDARRA as their most beloved brood mare and whose foals will carry on the bloodlines of this successful family. Ego was by the Chugg's homebred VOODOO, who was in turn by the very talented imported/exported Grand Prix horse VAL-EUR. Over his seven year career at elite level, Ego won nine World Cups and placed 2nd eleven times. He won twenty-two other major Grand Prix's, won the Australian league twice and was Golden Grand leading horse three times. He was instrumental in Chris being leading rider at Sydney Royal Show six times. Ego had career earnings in excess of \$100,000.00 - not bad for

Australia and for a lightly campaigned horse.

The Chugg's would have hoped for a different ending to Ego's wonderful story. A long and peaceful retirement with his old partner NAVY SEAL was planned but it was not to be. Ego died of an aneurysm on the 15th November 2006, just four days after running 2nd in the World Cup at Werribee. Helen and Chris were both with him at the end and he is buried on the same property he was born on. Ego was a show jumper through and through. He had a tremendous 'conscience,' always gave 100%, never disappointed and always approached his job with unending enthusiasm and heart.

Helen said they received many calls and e-mails after Ego's passing and marvels that is the true beauty of their sport, at the end of the day; it's all about the horses.

**SKY HIGH:** what can one say about the wonder-horse that started it all for the Chugg's? "Shultz" (as his friends knew him) was simply a 'star'. He was a lovely natured, imported Hanoverian stallion who took Chris from their beginnings together to eventual International competition. Chris and Shultz had their first World Cup start together in 1982 in Armidale and in true Fairy Tale tradition, won. He was a National Champion, a World Cup representative and the horse that gave the Chugg's the chance to turn their passion into a living. Emotionally, they say that words can't really describe what this wonderful horse meant to them or the gratitude and affection they still feel for him - "he was a beautiful, generous, talented and lovable character."

**MR CURRENCY:** "Tex" was a black New Zealand bred Thoroughbred by IMPERIAL SEAL. He came off the Hawkesbury track as a six year old after a modest racing career. Nicknamed Tex - because he was black with lighter brown eyes and, if he was an actor, would have been right at home playing the 'baddie in a black hat' in Westerns! A precocious talent who showed he was a star from his first outing. He rose quickly through the ranks and was jumping World Cup level within three years.

Tex won many titles on his way to the top and won five World Cup events in the 1990 season to finish the season with a total of 136 points from a possible 140!! He represented Australia at the World Cup finals in Goteburg in 1991 (finishing 19th) and Spain in the Barcelona Olympics (jumping a clear round and a 4 fault round in the Nations Cup for a team finish of 4th). 'Tex' was a very classical jumper and would be perfect for today's more technical and careful courses. He had a very strong character and didn't suffer fools gladly, he could be quite aggressive in the stable and demanded, and got, the respect he thought he deserved!!

**NAVY SEAL:** 'Blackie' is a black New Zealand bred Thoroughbred gelding by IMPERIAL SEAL. He came off the track and wasn't named 'Blackie' for lack of imagination - his racing name was BLACK MAGNUM. Although a somewhat difficult and hot horse, Blackie was a very competitive jumper and always tried his hardest - even when his temperament made it look sometimes 'hairy', his aim was always to leave the fences up! He won several World Cups and the National Show Jumping Title in 1995.

Being a quirky and playful type, Blackie relishes his retirement role of nanny to the weanlings and yearlings and runs a very strict paddock where he plays the role of 'Sheik of Scrubby Creek' to perfection.

**STRETCH:** was purchased by Chris' Mother Bev, as a two year old, through the Scone Thoroughbred Sale for the princely sum of \$250.00 (one bid above the Dog Tucker man). Bev actually purchased him twice - the first time through the ring for \$600.00 and then had to re-bid when it was discovered he was put through as the wrong horse! Named

ELASTIC PAC - his new competition name was obvious. A tall, lean type, he developed into a rangy and attractive horse. He was always a shy horse in his temperament and needed a lot of quiet riding and training to become a mature and brave competitor. He was a very 'soft' jumper with a lot of easy scope. STRETCH won at World cup level and ran second in the prestigious Bond Derby, to the legend MR SHRIMPION and was sold to Laurie Connell as an eight year old for Guy Creighton to ride. He finished his career in New Zealand with ex-pat Jeff McVean where he continued to win at World Cup level into his late teens.

**JAYBEE SHULTZ:** bred by Bev at Jaybee Farm, "Shultz" was from the last crop of SKY HIGH and was such a look-alike that he earned his fathers nickname. Roy Jessop purchased him as a weanling and he came to Diamond B Stud to be broken in at two and never left until his sale to the Hong Kong international Kenneth Cheng. Shultz won his first World Cup start (just like his father did) and was listed for the WEG in Spain. He contracted Colitis before the last trial and spent twelve months recovering, making a full recovery to return to Grand Prix competition before being purchased by Kenneth. He won the Young Rider Challenge at the World Cup final in Kuala Lumpur in 2006.

**WS SCANDAL:** owned by Peter and Caroline Wagner of Wagner's Saddlery fame, this feisty black Australian Thoroughbred mare is a legend in her own lifetime. Another precocious talent, her path to the top was jet propelled. A barrier rogue at the track, "Flo" was a girl with a definite opinion and a huge jump. She won the NSW SJC Futurity and had just started her career in open competition when, after a typically successful Sydney Royal, she was invited into the final training camp and selection trial for the Australian Touring team to Europe for the 1995 season. She picked herself with outstanding results and consistency, as a six year old!! Flo was the most successful horse of the Tour, placing at every show and was a member of the winning Nations Cup Team in Helsinki (the first Nations Cup win in Western Europe for an Aussie team). The main mission of the tour was to qualify a team for the Atlanta Olympics at the qualifier in Falsterbo, Sweden. The team didn't manage to qualify, but Chris and WS SCANDAL were the best performed and qualified an individual spot for Australia (Australia later got a team spot when New Zealand didn't send a team).

Flo returned home to wins at World Cup level but without assurances of a spot on the team to go to Atlanta, she was sold to HRH Princess Haya of Jordan.

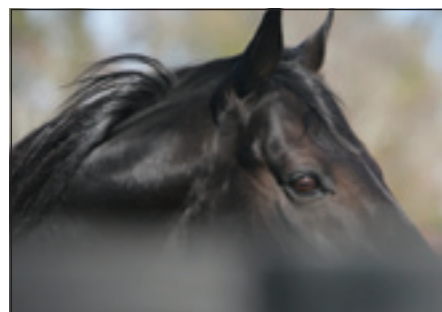
**SHOW/CIRCUIT** asked Chris a few pertinent questions to finish off this wonderful tale of magnificent horses and brilliant riding, not to mention team-work.

**SHOW/CIRCUIT:** It's obvious from the above, that you are able to get a tune out of ANY horse - is your flat work the secret to this?

**CHRIS CHUGG:** We have had to learn to ride all types of horses and so you develop skills to ride the hot, the cold and the in between. The sport these days requires a horse with fast reactions, a more 'blood' type and temperament, so the early days of riding Thoroughbred's was certainly great education. Good horses come in all shapes and sizes and you need to treat them as individuals. Of course, good flat work is the essential ingredient; intelligent horses need something to do, you don't want to dominate their personalities but you do want to guide their talent to make it easy for you as the rider and the horse to be able to perform to its best.

**SHOW/CIRCUIT:** Who would you say is your Mentor and why?

**CHRIS CHUGG:** George Morris has been a huge influence in my riding; his style of training is classical, consistent and always works. Helen also keeps a very close eye on things and reminds me of the end goals and



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the classical approach to flat work if I am getting distracted! Gilbert Bockmann is currently our National Coach and he is great to work with, a modern trainer who always goes back to the basics as well. I always keep in mind what George says, 'don't win the battle but lose the war!'

**SC:** Of course, we see you use Prydes Feeds, what out of their range in particular?

**CC:** Prydes came on board as a sponsor many years ago and it is such a great product - we started with Easi Result but these days we buy in the bulky bags, so the team gets Restore and anything under four years gets Bio Mare. Great products, easy to use and you know that the horses of all ages are getting everything they need.

**SC:** What is your impression of where NZ show jumping is at and what could an individual rider do to progress further?

**CC:** New Zealand is very much like Australia, lots of natural horsemen with a good base of home bred horses and now access to the best bloodlines from Europe - and of course VIVANT semen as well!!!!

Your young rider base is very impressive and they just need to keep the end goal in site, good basics produce good jumping. With organisers like Kevin Hansen and his team, New Zealand jumping can only keep improving. By providing shows like your Horse of the Year, it raises the bar. Both our countries have to keep inviting overseas course builders and put on shows like your Horse of the Year to give all riders across the board a goal to reach, keep striving to improve, keep stretching and challenging ourselves. With the sort of horses we are breeding now, they will encourage good riding and good training, with great organisers with passion for our sport, I reckon jumping is looking healthy both sides of the Tasman.



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