



Thursday 25 November, 2021

TAB Melbourne Cup: Armchair guide

By Gerard Guthrie

Superstar sprinter **Koblenz** was bred to win the Group 1 TAB Melbourne Cup and after surviving a drama-charged dead heat to qualify for the world's greatest race, the blueblood looms as the main danger to favourite **Aston Rupee** in Friday night's \$762,500 final to run at 8.53pm.

Aston Rupee (Box 4), trained by Glenn Rounds, who teamed with late partner Judy Hayley to win the Cup in 2001 with Classic Capri, heads TAB betting at \$2.40, with **Koblenz** (Box 3) the \$3.10 second elect.

Koblenz, a son of champion 2015 Melbourne Cup runner-up Fernando Bale and 2017 finalist Up Hill Jill, is bred and trained by David Geall and wife Rose, who are aiming at their second Cup triumph after the win of My Redeemer in 2018.

"This is the race all trainers aspire to win and it's a thrill to be there again, especially when we've bred, whelped and reared him," said Geall.

A brilliant front-runner with faultless box manners, **Koblenz**, the winner of 25 of his 38 starts, started \$1.30 favourite in the opening Cup heat but there were several anxious moments during and after his dead heat with Angela Langton's **Jepara** (Box 2). It was the first time a dead-heat had occurred in a Melbourne Cup heat in the race's 65-year history.

"I thought Koblenz had just won but it went on and on and then the dead heat came up," said Geall.

"Someone said it would be a toss of the coin and I was worried we could be bombing out. It was seven or eight minutes before we found out the slowest time would miss out."

Typhoon Sammy was the unlucky greyhound to be relegated to first reserve despite winning his heat, with Geall now fully focussed on what lies ahead for **Koblenz** on Friday night.

"Box 3 is a good draw on one hand and not so good on the other hand, because he's somehow got to get across **Aussie Secret** (Box 1). Then it depends on where **Aston Rupee** gets to – we'd want to be at least three lengths in front of him.

“Koblenz ran 5.05sec early in his heat and we’re hoping he can break 5 seconds this week, which he has done on several occasions. If he does that I’d expect him to lead the race. He’s jumped (well) in 27 of his last 28 starts so I’m hoping he’s not due to miss it!

“He’ll run a great race and I’m confident he can finish in the top four.”

The other runners at single figures in Cup betting are \$8 chance **Aussie Secret**, trained by three-time Cup winner Jason Thompson, who’s striving to become the first trainer to win the race on four occasions with his 20th finalist, and fastest heat winner **Lala Kiwi** (Box 5) at \$9, prepared by another multiple Melbourne Cup winning trainer in Andrea Dailly.

Here’s a rundown of the contenders:

GROUP 1 TAB MELBOURNE CUP (515m)

Sandown Park Friday, Race 7, 8.53pm

1st \$500,000 | 2nd \$150,000 | 3rd \$75,000 | 4th \$37,500

1 AUSSIE SECRET

Trainer: Jason Thompson (Pearcedale VIC)

Breeding: October 2018 Bernardo x Sunset Believer

Record: Won 31 from 60. **Sandown PB:** 29.37sec.

Comment: One of the most consistent sprinters in Australia, prepared by three-time Cup-winning trainer. Likes to race off the rails but has strong Box 1 (6 from 10) and Sandown 515m (5 from 9) credentials. Will be prominent from the outset and with early luck could prove hard to catch.

2 JEPARA

Trainer: Angela Langton (Anakie VIC)

Breeding: February 2019 Fernando Bale x Tarks Nemesis

Record: Won 17 from 50. **Sandown PB:** 29.31sec.

Comment: Returned to form when dead-heating with Koblenz in heat. Chances could be determined by whether he misses Aussie Secret on his inside in the opening exchanges but if he avoids early trouble has the ability to surprise at odds.

3 KOBLENZ

Trainer: David Geall (Lara VIC)

Breeding: May 2019 Fernando Bale x Up Hill Jill

Record: Won 25 from 38. **Sandown PB:** 29.16sec.

Comment: Superbly-bred speed machine, faultless beginner with sensational strike rate. Has an excellent record from inside three boxes – beaten only twice in 16 starts from Boxes 1, 2, and 3. Has broken 5 seconds early on several occasions at Sandown and will take a power of catching if he finds the front.

4 ASTON RUPEE

Trainer: Glenn Rounds (Devon Meadows VIC)

Breeding: April 2019 KC And All x Aston Miley

Record: Won 19 from 32. **Sandown PB:** 28.79sec (Track Record)

Comment: Sandown track record holder and deserved favourite. Has proven almost unstoppable in winning 8 of his last 9 starts, including the two fastest times ever recorded at Sandown, the G1 Topgun and G3 Shootout. Overcame difficulties in barnstorming heat victory and is clearly the one to beat with a clear run.

5 LALA KIWI

Trainer: Andrea Dailly (Anakie VIC)

Breeding: May 2019 Aussie Infrared x Lala Shim

Record: Won 16 from 37. **Sandown PB:** 29.24sec.

Comment: Only female in the race and fastest qualifier after taking advantage of Box 1 in dominant 29.24sec heat victory, boosting her imposing Sandown record to 4 from 6. Draw makes her task a tough one but with luck in running will be competitive and shouldn't be overlooked.

6 LAKEVIEW WALTER

Trainer: Monique Whelan (Metung VIC)

Breeding: April 2019 Fernando Bale x Lakeview Maisey

Record: Won 11 from 29. **Sandown PB:** 29.15sec.

Comment: Winner of the G1 Silver Chief in January and has made a timely return to his best, winning G3 Silver Bullet followed by impressive 29.26sec heat victory, the second quickest qualifying performance. Made every post a winner from Box 1 in heat success but will find it tough to repeat from awkward alley. Knockout chance with luck in transit.

7 TIBERIA BALE

Trainer: Andrea Dailly (Anakie VIC)

Breeding: November 2018 Barcia Bale x Folio Bale

Record: Won 11 from 58. **Sandown PB:** 29.64sec.

Comment: Upset heat winner when turning around average recent form from inside draw in Box 2 and likely to go around at big odds again from wide alley. Difficult to see him getting into the race from out here.

8 KINSON BALE

Trainer: Samantha Grenfell (Anakie VIC)

Breeding: August 2019 Barcia Bale x Hae Allen

Record: Won 12 from 44. **Sandown PB:** 29.47sec.

Comment: Talented type facing biggest test to date but has been highly competitive in elite company recently. Won't find it easy to get across in such esteemed company but a repeat of his 5.02sec heat split will put him right in the early picture. Each way prospects.

Reserves

9 TYPHOON SAMMY

Trainer: Jason Thompson (Pearcedale VIC)

Breeding: January 2019 Aston Dee Bee x Zabaleta

Record: Won 19 from 28. **Sandown PB:** 29.65sec.

Comment: Prodigious talent that's been airborne since relocating to Victoria. Very unlucky not to be in final field after winning heat but being squeezed out on times due to dead-heat in earlier runoff. Will have taken great benefit from two Sandown runs and should be treated warily if gains a start.

10 JAX BALE

Trainer: Andrea Dailly (Anakie VIC)

Breeding: January 2018 Allen Deed x Helma Bale

Record: Won 17 from 73. **Sandown PB:** 29.14sec.

Comment: Veteran sprinter with impressive Sandown statistics but minor claims would be best if he snuck into the field.

KEY TIMES

6.52pm G3 Provincial Plate (Race 1)

7.34pm Vic Bred Maiden Final (Race 3)

8.12pm G1 Bold Trease Final (Race 5)

8.27pm G3 TAB Cup Night Sprint (Race 6)

8.53pm G1 TAB Melbourne Cup Final (Race 7)

9.12pm G3 Sir John Dillon Memorial (Race 8)

9.34pm Listed Cup Night Stayers (Race 9)

10.30pm Last race (Race 12)

GROUP 1 BOLD TREASE (715m)

Sandown Park Friday, Race 5, 8.12pm

1st \$105,000 | 2nd \$30,000 | 3rd \$15,000 | 4th \$7,500

1 UNTAPPED (Dustin Drew, Dennington VIC)

2 KENNY THE BRUTE (Kel Greenough, Pearcedale VIC)

3 MEPUNGA RUBY (Jeff Britton, Anakie VIC)

4 RUN LIKE JESS (Robert Camilleri, Lara VIC)

5 KNICKS BALE (Samantha Grenfell, Anakie, VIC)

6 GYPSY WYONG (Andrea Dailly, Anakie VIC)

7 LINE OF QUALITY (Darryl Thomas, Sawyers Gully NSW)

8 DRAKO BALE (Andrea Dailly, Anakie VIC)

Reserves

9 STANLEY ROAD (Mark Gatt, Thirlmere NSW)

10 NIKEPHOROS (Tim Britton, Lara VIC)

RECENT MELBOURNE CUP WINNERS

2011 Dyna Tron (Andrea Dailly, Anakie VIC)
2012 Got A Moment (Jason Thompson, Pearcedale VIC)
2013 Black Magic Opal (Jason Thompson, Pearcedale VIC)
2014 Dyna Villa (Jenny Hunt, Teesdale VIC)
2015 Dyna Double One (Andrea Dailly, Anakie VIC)
2016 Ando's Mac (Jason Mackay, Richmond Vale NSW)
2017 Aston Dee Bee (Seona Thompson, Pearcedale VIC)
2018 My Redeemer (David Geall, Lara VIC)
2019 Whiskey Riot (Anthony Azzopardi, Rowsley VIC)
2020 Hard Style Rico (Luckie Karabitsakos, Pearcedale, VIC)

MELBOURNE CUP FACTS & FIGURES – compiled by Peter Quilty

Winning box statistics since the first Melbourne Cup in 1956

Box 1 has produced 17 winners, including two of past four – Aston Dee Bee (2017) and My Redeemer (2018)

Box 2: 8 winners, most recent Dyna Double One (2015)

Box 3: 7 winners, most recent Whiskey Riot (2019)

Box 4: 6 winners, most recent Betty's Angel (2006)

Box 5: 6 winners, most recent Hard Style Rico (2020) in a race record 28.91sec

Box 6: 4 winners, most recent Shanlyn Prince (2007)

Box 7: 8 winners, most recent Dyna Tron (2011)

Box 8: 7 winners, most recent Dyna Villa (2014)

- From the past 21 Melbourne Cups, only six favourites have saluted – 2000 Go Wild Teddy (\$2.20), 2002 Excite Ability (\$2.70F), 2003 Bombastic Shiraz (\$2.30), 2010 El Grand Senor (\$1.70), 2013 Black Magic Opal (\$2.00) and 2017 Aston Dee Bee (\$2.40).

- Just a nose separated Whiskey Riot and Western Envoy in the 2019 Melbourne Cup, the smallest margin in the race's history

- Fox Hunt (1991) has the biggest winning margin – nine lengths.

- Gold Grotto (1972) is the shortest-priced winner at 1/2.

- The longest-priced winner in the past 20 years is Classic Capri (\$25.90) in 2001.

- 2015 Melbourne Cup runner-up Fernando Bale has sired two of the past three winners – My Redeemer (2018) and Whiskey Riot (2019). This year he's represented by three finalists.

- Aston Rupee is attempting to become only the second winner of the 'triple crown',

comprising the Topgun, Shootout and Melbourne Cup after Bombastic Shiraz achieved the feat in 2003.

HOW TO FOLLOW THE ACTION

- **Thrill of the Chase** TV show with Molly Haines, Gareth Hall & George Farrugia on **7Two** and via **The Watchdog app** from 6-7pm.
 - Comprehensive live telecast trackside with Jason Lincoln, Marc Ohlmus and Jason Adams on **Sky Racing, watchdog.grv.org.au** and via **The Watchdog App**.
 - Behind the scenes Twitter coverage with '**@SandownDogs**' and '**@WatchDogRacing**'.
 - Regular updates with Trent Langskail on **RSN Racing and Sport (927 AM)**.
 - Coverage of the TAB Melbourne Cup Final with Andrew Copley on **3AW (693 AM)**.
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For media enquiries contact:

Andrew Copley
GRV's Racing Communication Manager
0425 763 924