

John Meek *and* Doc's Chevelle



John Meek believes that his winning the Gold Cup gives heart to all the smaller competitors. In 1998 he travelled to Warwick with his only horse, Doc's Chevelle, and after coming second the year before, believed he would probably never get that close to the Cup again. How wrong he was.

John was born in Rolleston and always loved horses, but as he lived in town, learning to ride wasn't easy. He learnt to ride during the holidays on his grandfather's property and while still at school got a job riding track work. His desire to work with horses and cattle increased as he grew older, so at 14 he left school and secured a job with a contract musterer and then doing station work.

His desire to compete with his horses was building and he first started to compete as a 20 year old in 1976. He had reasonable success early on and at his third competition he won the Open at Theodore. John recalls that he was so excited that he thought he was Charlie Flohr reborn. His first big win was the Novice Draft at the Queensland Championships at Duaranga in 1977 on a horse he educated himself.

He continued to campdraft, but not regularly year in year out. Over the next 15 years he had a couple of spells where he was doing other things and didn't compete for a couple of years at a time.

It was during one of these off times that he decided he would like to try a Spinifex mare and at the 1991

Rockhampton Quarter Horse Sale he purchased Doc's Chevelle as a green broken 2 year old. She was by Doc's Spinifex and out of a Pine-O-Lena mare He paid \$6000 for her which was a lot at the time. John remembers with a smile, "I got my name in the paper for buying her, so it must have been plenty. Plus the experts all said she wouldn't draft".

John took her home and after a few rides turned her out for 12 months. She then had plenty of basic work as John was working on Kareela, Springsure at the time. Her first run in a campdraft was as a four year old when she ran fourth in a Novice at Upper Horton. She continued being drafted lightly and her first win came when Glenda, John's partner, won a Progressive on her at Cooyar as a six year old. She was still a Progressive mare when she won the Gold Cup, but she had run a lot of places, including 2nd in the Cup the previous year, and had won a lot of Cut Outs.

John is one of the few competitors who insist winning the Gold Cup was never a priority as he never expected he could win it. Even after coming 2nd the year before he thought "Well that's it, it wasn't meant to be". He does admit though, that the thrill of winning was something he couldn't have imagined. "The cards and letters people sent and the magazine coverage was amazing, and people just don't forget. Even now people still want to talk about it." For the win John received \$3700, the A.S.H. Prize of \$1000 and rug, the Quarter Horse prize of a gold buckle valued at \$1200, a Brady saddle, plus the Gold Cup and rug.

Chevelle's record at Warwick is very strong and one that John is proud of, more so for his little mare than for himself.

- 1996 - *Unplaced*
- 1997 - *Ran off Canning Downs Cutout and 2nd in the Gold Cup*
- 1998 - *Wins 1st Gold Cup*
- 1999 - *Unplaced*
- 2000 - *Cutout Winner Gold Cup Ridden by Mark Buttsworth*

Finalist Canning Downs

In 2001 Chevelle was retired to stud and she now has a lovely filly foal at foot by Cattle Baron. She will return to competition in 2002 and will no doubt be one to respect in future Gold Cups.

For John Meek, working on the land wasn't a given – it was something he had to make a real effort to become involved in. After coming second in the 1997 Warwick Gold Cup, this quietly spoken man thought he'd come as close to Gold as he ever would. How wrong he was...