

# Theseo ... the iron horse



Theseo (main and bottom inset) is the pride and joy of syndicator Denise Martin (inset top, centre with Tania Rouse and Gai Waterhouse)



BY RAY HICKSON

THESEO is a special horse to Denise Martin.

While she has syndicated more than 400 horses through Star Thoroughbreds, including 2008 Golden Slipper winner Sebring, Theseo stands out for several reasons.

And when the six-year-old won his fifth Group One race, the Ranvet Stakes, two weeks ago she discovered first hand that the horse is special not only to her, the 10 owners and the Gai Waterhouse stable.

"He's acquired a fan base around the country now that is quite extensive," Martin told *Sportsman*.

"We receive emails and text messages about the horse and when he raced in the Ranvet there must have been a couple of dozen people

on course who said to me, 'We are here to see my favourite horse Theseo'.

"They said, 'We just love horses like that who get to the front and keep fighting to the line'.

"They are really special, aren't they?"

A sixth Group One win is Theseo's target in Saturday's \$2.27 million The BMW (2400m) at Rosehill. He'll top the \$3 million mark by running in the first 10, but a win will see him sail past \$4 million in prizemoney.

Not bad for a horse that was considered expensive by Martin when she bought him at the Magic Millions sales for \$120,000.

"At the time I purchased what became Theseo I hadn't spent more than \$100,000 at any sale for any of my yearlings," she said.

"There were several horses that Gai recommended to Star, most notably Dance Hero which ended up selling for \$90,000, which I hadn't bought.

"It was at that stage I realised

I needed to spend more in some cases to buy the superior quality yearlings.

"You wait a lifetime to have an interest in a horse that wins five Group Ones, they are very special."

Despite being sired by one of Australia's most popular gallopers of the 90s, Danewin, Martin wasn't sure Theseo would be a commercial prospect.

But after some prodding from Gai Waterhouse, she was sold the moment she laid eyes on the horse.

"Danewin is not one of the more high profile stallions," she said.

"I looked at the pedigree page and thought I didn't want to spend \$100,000 on a Danewin colt, but then I saw the yearling and I remember thinking at the time he was the loveliest walking horse I'd ever seen."

From the time Theseo hit the training tracks he was earmarked by jockey Danny Beasley, who was riding for the stable at the time, as a

future high-class stayer. He'd shown promise as a young horse, but it wasn't until 2008 that Theseo began to make an impact.

After EI ruined his, and thousands of other horses' spring of 2007, Theseo won the Magic Millions Cup on the Gold Coast then developed into a weight-for-age performer with a close second in the George Main Stakes, a win in the Epsom Handicap, a game fifth in the Cox Plate and a narrow victory in the Mackinnon Stakes.

"When he returned in his four-year-old year in the autumn, he won the Magic Millions Cup over 1400m and we thought that was sensational," Martin said.

"We had no idea what was to come."

Again the horse was forced to miss the spring of 2009 but wins in the St George and Ranvet Stakes and close seconds in the Australian Cup and The BMW proved his class.

"He had a major foot injury that could have been career-ending,"

Martin said. "Gai detected the problem very early and decided we needed to abort that preparation and give the horse every chance for the problem to heal.

"I know that the stable feels he is racing at least as well as he was 12 months ago if not better."

Theseo's wins in the Chipping Norton and his second Ranvet suggest that's a fair statement but he was beaten on a heavy track by Fiumicino in The BMW in 2009.

"Nash (Rawiller) and Gai aren't overly concerned about a wet track he is going that well," Martin said.

"We go into the race having won five Group Ones.

"If Theseo wins this race and achieves six he will be included with Gai's best horses to date like Grand Armee and Desert War.

"He's a Group One weight-for-age performer now and in my view he is the dominant weight-for-age performer in Australia at present."