



**Thursday 21 March, 2024**

## **2024 Shepparton Cup: Armchair Guide**

**By Peter Quilty**

Champion Pearcedale trainer Jason Thompson's country cups 'gravy train' doesn't look like stopping... In fact, it should be 'express' all the way in the \$83,000 Group 2 CKH Painting Shepparton Cup (450m) – Race 10, 8.41pm – on Saturday night.

Thompson will be in the 'driver's seat' hurtling towards an unprecedented fifth Shepparton Cup courtesy of sensational sprinters **Flying Zulu** (Box 8), **Explicit** (Box 1) and **Got Attitude** (Box 2) in the \$55,000 to-the-winner final. All three won their heats last Monday in 24.63sec (Best), 24.70sec and 25.04sec respectively.

**Explicit** (Sportsbet's \$1.80F), **Flying Zulu** (\$2.35) or **Got Attitude** (\$26) could also remarkably provide Thompson with a third G2 country cup this year.

He's already won the Warragul Cup (**Tim Zoo**) on January 13 and Traralgon Cup (**Unleash Collinda**) on January 26. (**Explicit** was runner-up to **Fernando Phil** in the Horsham Cup on March 8.)

Thompson's Shepparton Cup winners are **Head Honcho** (1993), **Whisky Assassin** (2004), **Hanify's Impact** (2008) and **Aston Bolero** (2016).

**Flying Zulu** (7 wins from 10 starts), who is undefeated in four starts at Shepparton, made an amazing return to racing after a four-month hiatus with a near-record heat win. He hadn't been 'behind the boxes' since finishing eighth in a heat of last year's G1 Melbourne Cup on November 25.

But G1 Temlee and G3 Great Chase winner **Explicit** (13 from 17), who was around one length slower than Flying Zulu in the Shepparton Cup heats, holds slight favouritism for the final.

And that's largely on the basis he's 'four from four' exiting Box 1. He's also undefeated in two starts at Shepparton.

**Got Attitude** (17 from 40) is the far less favoured of Thompson's terrific triumvirate in betting. However, he's won five races from six starts at Shepparton and is a six-time Group race finalist – including runner-up in last year's G1 Hobart Thousand.

Avalon's Michelle Mallia is vying for a second country cup with **Fernando Phil** (Box 7) in 15 days. She's also after a second Shepparton Cup, having won with **Blackalls Boss** in 2012.

Fresh from his Horsham Cup heroics, **Fernando Phil** (9 from 26) finished second (beaten 1.75L) to **Smooth Plane** in a Shepparton Cup heat.

**Fernando Phil** (\$12) 'flies under the radar', but it should be duly noted he's also contested a G1 Australian Cup and G1 Silver Chief.

Anakie's Tom Dailly will launch a two-pronged challenge in the final with **Shima Shadow** (Box 5) and **Smooth Plane** (Box 6).

Both won their heats in 24.73sec and 24.87sec respectively.

Subsequently they are quoted as \$10 and \$26 chances.

Late last year, **Smooth Plane** (10 from 29) won the G3 Provincial Plate, finished third in the G3 Great Chase and was a G1 Silver Chief finalist.

**Shima Shadow** (20 from 48) is a six-time Group race finalist – including the 2023 G1 Hobart Thousand and the recent G2 Horsham Cup.

Dailly is chasing his third Shepparton Cup. He saluted with **Star Of Mine** 1999) and **Knockabout Wok** (2002).

Gippsland speedsters **Here Comes Artie** (Box 4) – prepared at Maffra by Des Douch – and **West On Strobe** (Box 3) – trained by Lyn Smith at Nambrok – also qualified for the final.

Both finished second in their respective heat – **Here Comes Artie** was beaten a 'whisker' by Shima Shadow and West On Strobe went down to Explicit by 5L.

**Here Comes Artie** (12 from 40) is rated a \$17 chance, while **West On Strobe** (15 from 65) is the rank outsider at \$101. Both are making their Group race final debuts.

### Points of Interest:

- Jason Thompson has won the race on four occasions – Head Honcho (1993), Whisky Assassin (2004), Hanify's Impact (2008) – the most recent female winner – and Aston Bolero (2016).  
He also quinellaed the race with Head Honcho and Tranquil Flame in 1993.  
Thompson has also had the following runners-up – Unleash Collinda (2023), Catch The Thief (2021) and Ronan Izmir (2013); and third placegetters – El Brooklyn (2012), Aston Galilee (2011) and Skaise (2009).  
In the past 20 years, Thompson has had 22 Shepparton Cup finalists – including Explicit (Box 1), Got Attitude (Box 2) and Flying Zulu (Box 8) in this year's final.  
His wife, Seona, finished runner-up with Bewildering in 2017
- Tom Dailly, who has Shima Shadow (Box 5) and Smooth Plane (Box 6) in this year's final, has won the Shepparton Cup twice – Star Of Mine (1999) and Knockabout Wok (2002).  
He quinellaed the race with Knockabout Wok and Fidler Bale in 2002.  
Dailly finished seventh last year with Indy Fido.  
His wife, Andrea, finished third with Shima Song in 2016. Shima Song is the dam of Shima Shadow.
- Michelle Mallia, who has Fernando Phil (Box 7) in this year's final, won the Shepparton Cup with Blackalls Boss in 2012.  
Mallia finished eighth last year with Matt's Hope and fourth with Zoom Out in 2018.  
Zoom Out is the dam of Fernando Phil – named in honour of Mallia's father-in-law Phil Magri, who passed away when Fernando Phil was only nine months old.  
Fernando Phil is part-owned by Magri's sons, Ronnie and Kevin.
- During the past two decades only four favourites have won the Shepparton Cup.  
The shortest-priced winner in this period is Slater (\$1.50) in 2006.  
And the longest-priced winner in this period is Knockabout Wok (\$24.80) in 2002.

- The race record, since being first staged over 450m in 2006, is held by Ferdinand Boy (24.75sec) in 2021.
- Two female trainers have finalists this year – Michelle Mallia (Fernando Phil) and Lyn Smith (West On Strobe).  
The most recent female to claim the Shepparton Cup is Brooke Ennis with Zinzan Brooke in 2017.
- There is no female greyhound in this year's Shepparton Cup.  
In fact, only one member of the fairer sex has won the race during the past 20 years – Hanify's Impact (2008).

### **Heat winners (fastest to slowest):**

24.63sec – Flying Zulu

24.70sec – Explicit

24.73sec – Smooth Plane

24.87sec – Shima Shadow

25.04sec – Got Attitude

### **RECENT SHEPPARTON CUP WINNERS**

2012 **Blackalls Boss** (Michelle Mallia, Avalon VIC)

2013 **Paw Licking** (Kel Greenough, Pearcedale VIC)

2014 \*\*\* Race Not Held \*\*\*

2015 **Azza Azza Azza** (Wayne Vassallo, Pearcedale VIC)

2016 (February) **Gotta Get Back** (John McClelland, Jindera NSW);  
(September) **Aston Bolero** (Jason Thompson, Pearcedale VIC)

2017 **Zinzan Brooke** (Brooke Ennis, Lara VIC)

2018 **Peter Galo** (Garry Selkrig, Devon Meadows VIC)

2019 \*\*\* Race Not Held \*\*\*

2020 **Hard Style Rico** (Luckie Karabitsakos, Pearcedale VIC)

2021 **Ferdinand Boy** (David Geall, Lara VIC)

2022 **Substantial** (Anthony Azzopardi, Rowsley VIC)

2023 **Lektra Heckler** (Jake Loverso, Pearcedale VIC)

### **KEY TIMES**

5.42pm First race

6.55pm \$11,025 GRV VicBred Final (1-4 Wins) (Race 5)

7.53pm \$14,575 Tony McGrath Memorial (Race 8)

8.41pm \$83,000 Group 2 CKH Painting Shepparton Cup Final (Race 10)

9.28pm Last race (Race 12)

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