

Orphaned at birth. Gangrene. Nothing's stopping Red Rackham

Local pacer Red Rackham has been the star of the new weekly, Tuesday night meetings at Cambridge this month.

The four-year-old son of Vincent made it three wins, three weeks in a row when saluting for trainer Arna Donnelly and driver Zachary Butcher this past Tuesday night.

There on hand to enjoy each win were local friends, Kym Kearns and Bee Pears, who are the proud owner and breeder, respectively.

Kearns, who works as a librarian during the day, says watching Red Rackham develop from frustrating maiden to winning machine in the past fortnight or so has been a real thrill.

And the old saying 'it takes a village to raise a child' resonates in this case.

"It's been a long process with this horse," said Kearns.

"I trained him for a couple of years on my own but just didn't have the tools to bring the horse along to where he needed to be."

Headstrong and frustrating, Kearns sent Red Rackham along to Donnelly and her team at the local Raceway.

"Then he stood on a nail and got a bone infection which turned into gangrene.

"The Cambridge-based trainers and drivers, farriers and vets, all nurtured him back to health."

It was a fight most horses are destined to lose, too.

"About 98% of horses do not come back from gangrene.

"It was only through the quick intervention of Arna Donnelly that saved him; if it had gone another day, we would have lost him.

"It wasn't just Arna, though. Pat and Tim Hall, Rodney Frampton, Kyle Marshall, David Butcher, Zev Meredith, they all helped him along the way.

"The trainers and drivers of Cambridge really came together to get this horse to this point.

"Barbara Hunter, the vet from Matamata, she did an excellent job too."

Kearns says Red Rackham was on the back foot from literally the first day of his life and he's had to overcome adversity ever since.

"He was an orphan after just a few hours and the team at

Alabar nurtured him, put their hearts and souls into him, to get him started and find his way in life."

Donnelly says Red Rackham has been a test of her resolve but she's glad he's finally repaying everyone.

"Even though he was still a maiden, he had been racing quite good at Auckland," said Donnelly.

"He's a funny horse though in that if he doesn't get his own way, he can get up on the engine quite hard.

"He's probably the perfect Tuesday horse because he's got a good bit of gate speed and can make his own terms.

"Kym has been so patient with him, so it's been bloody good to repay that."

Kearns came to own Red

Rackham thanks to Pears making an exceedingly generous gesture as a thanks for hours of built-up goodwill.

"For years and years, I did a lot of horses for Bee, for the sales and things like that.

"And often money wasn't exchanged but she had it in the back of her mind everything I had done for her.

"Then one day, she gifted him to me. I couldn't believe it! No one does that.

"She knew it was my dream to own a well-bred horse and buying one as a yearling was probably unachievable for me."

Red Rackham certainly carries a deep pedigree page, the most notable being his half-brother, Tintin In America, a former NZ 4YO of the Year and father to US Horse of the Year, Shartin.

He's the 12th and last foal out of broodmare gem Zenterfold, who left five other winners including The Blue Lotus, Destination Moon and Thephantomtollbooth.

Kearns has admiration for Pears intellect as a standard-bred breeder and says she hopes her work will earn the acclaim it deserves over time.

"The intellectual way she approaches breeding and making something work, she deserves her accolades.

"Not everything pans out but the breedings are always so well thought out.

"People should sit up and take notice. I'm just over the moon to own a horse that she bred."

Kearns herself dabbled in breeding and has the distinction of breeding a horse that was, at one point, Australasia's fastest ever trotter.

Flying Isa, who started his career off as New Zealand 2YO Trotter of the Year in 2011, set a record mark of 1.53.2 at Menangle in 2014 and eventually went on to good things in America.

Kearns bred out of his dam Sun Isa and granddam Isa Countessa with good success.

"My objective was to get that breed back out into society.

"Isa Countessa was the last mare standing from that breed and I thought it was too good to let die.

"I managed to preserve it and now there are a couple of younger mares carrying on the line." - **by Garrick Knight**



Bee Pears and Kym Kearns with Red Rackham and Zac Butcher at Cambridge on Tuesday night.