

The Melbourne Cup

The Melbourne Cup Why is the Melbourne Cup viewed as THE race which decides the relative greatness of an Australian racehorse? After all, for most of its history the event has been nothing more than popular two-mile (3200 metres) handicap, largely contested by hack stayers and popular with housewives for their yearly 'flutter' on the races. Yet, victory in the Melbourne Cup is almost a pre-requisite for a place in the pantheon of superstars. The success of Carbine in 1890, Phar Lap in 1930, and Makybe Diva in 2003, 2004, and 2005, has ensured these three horses a permanent place in the racing sun. Two other greats, Tulloch and Kingston Town, both contested the great race, the former running seventh (the only unplaced run of his career) and the latter finished a neck second in one of his two attempts at lifting the event. Both Tulloch and Kingston Town tasted success in two-mile handicaps (Brisbane Cup and Sydney Cup) and are therefore rated highly. Bernborough never ran in a Melbourne Cup -indeed he never raced beyond 2400 metres (12 furlongs)- and this fact has probably been one of the key factors restricting his elevation to superstar. What is long forgotten is the fact Bernborough had been allocated a massive 149 pounds (67 kgs) by the handicapper for the 1946 Melbourne Cup. Had he raced and won, he would have set a weight-carrying record. Such was the VRC handicapper's opinion of a horse he knew had never, at the time weights were issued, gone beyond 11 furlongs (2200 metres). Take the Melbourne Cup, and even two-mile races, out of the equation when considering a horse's greatness and it's just possible the popular consensus would be that Bernborough was indeed the best the nation has ever seen.