



The Melbourne Cup

The Race that Stops a Nation

Contributed by Sarah Ward

Melbourne Cup Day is fixed for the first Tuesday in November. The race is recognized as the greatest 3200 metre handicap horse-race in the world. It is held at Flemington, a Melbourne suburb which is called after a butcher who once lived there.

Melbourne was relatively young having been discovered in 1833 and, at the height of the Cup's inception, was experiencing the Gold Rush with many people flocking to Melbourne, and subsequently Bendigo and Ballarat, in the hope of a life changing experience. The first Cup was run in 1861. This was the time of death of Burke and Wills, two of Australia's daring pioneers who were the first to track the harsh Australian terrain from North to South. It is recorded that the local community were in a state of mourning at this time and understandably the first Melbourne Cup was run under rather subdued circumstances.

There were 17 starters and, paradoxically, the prize - apart from the money (170 pounds) - was not a cup at all, but a hand-beaten gold watch. Archer, the Winning horse, had walked to Melbourne from its stable in Nowra, New South Wales, a distance of 500 miles (800km). The Cup, as we know it today, was first designed by Mr James Steeth in readiness for the 1919 Melbourne Cup. Today's Emirates Melbourne Cup is a stunning 18 carat gold trophy valued at \$80,000. Noted for its "Loving Cup" design, the trophy is one of the most identifiable sporting trophies anywhere in the world.

Activity One – Looking good

The Melbourne cup is well-known as a showcase of Spring fashion, and as such, a hat is a very important accessory. This is a chance to clear the craft cupboard of all the left-overs! Girls craft their very own hat. You will need plenty of pairs of scissors, staples and glue. Hats are then left to dry whilst other activities are underway.

Activity Two – Getting Ready

Girls are asked to bring their own horses to the event (not real ones!, these can be plastic, stuffed toys etc – not breakable ornament horses) On arrival, girls are asked the names of their horses which are written on small pieces of paper which are jumbled up. A sweep is then conducted with girls pulling out a name.



Activity Three – Off and Racing

Girls line up at the starting line with their horses. A dice is used and passed along to measure the distance (toe to heel steps) each girl/horse can take, e.g. Throw a six, take six heel to toe steps. To add atmosphere a leader can "call" the race. First three girl/horses over the finish line are winner and two place-getters.

Activity Four – The Presentation

First prizes are awarded to the winning three horses, then prizes are awarded to the winners of the sweep. The hats are worn and paraded in a proper parade (again, atmosphere can be added by leaders commentating the parade). Votes are taken on the best hat. You may have several sections here... In conclusion, remaining girls can be given prizes for being "Good Sports".

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~basiced3/cup/history.html>

<http://horseracing.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ/Ya&sdn=horseracing&cdn=sports&tm=26&f=20&tt=14&bt=1&bts=1&zu=http%3A/www.melbournecup.com/melbourne-cup-carnival/history-of-melbourne-cup.asp>