TRACKING THE WORK OF STAYERS AND SPRINTERS

BY STEPHEN HOWELL

Mornington trainer Pat Carey is known for not rushing the preparation of his horses. Hence, when he talks up a training aid, you know he has considered the animal's best interest.

When Inside Racing visited Carey's Espom Lodge stables for a story on his patient approach to training stayers, he talked up the benefit of E-Trakka, describing the heart-rate monitor as one of the best advances in training.

"It applies a bit of science to your natural instincts in assessing the recovery of the horse," he said. "I think when you're dealing with stayers that it's certainly breaking new ground and an enormous help to trainers."

While emphasising that the "outstanding factor" in success is "the quality of horse delivered to the stable", Carey said E-Trakka narrowed the margin in training.

He has only one blanket with a monitor, saying he was "not an AK47, but a self-loading rifle. It's a relatively expensive product ... we rotate it through the horses and important gallops.

"I've used it on Ethiopia (this year's Group 1 AJC Derby winner) and Cedarberg (the ill-fated winner of last year's Group 1 The BMW).

"The one thing that those horses established was their enormous recovery from strenuous work, and I just found that outstanding.

"I've been using it for nearly 12 months," he said in May. "I watched a triathlon go past me the other day at the World Cup and they had 1600 competitors going in an ultra-triathlon and everyone had heart-rate monitors—to be able to apply that type of science to the athletic competition of training racehorses, I reckon is an amazing tool."

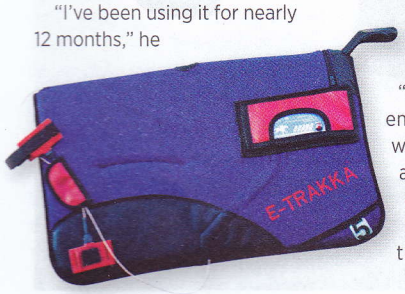
Carey said the importance of a trainer's eye would not be lost, but E-Trakka, which allowed him to see on a computer screen how hard a horse's heart was working and how quickly it recovered, added a new dimension.

He said with stayer and non-stayer, "it all boils down to capacity, and that science allows you an insight into a horse's capacity".

An extra advantage is that by monitoring the E-Trakka on a computer screen elsewhere enabled trainers to check on their horses from afar, as Scone (Hunter Valley, NSW) trainer Paul Messara did on the sprinting mare Ortensia's trips to Dubai and England this year that brought two Group 1 wins—the Al Quoz Sprint (1000m) at Meydan in Dubai in March and the Nunthorpe Stakes (1000m) at York in England in August before she was injured when well back in the G1 Betfred Sprint Cup (1200m) at Haydock in September.

Messara told Ray Thomas of the Daily Telegraph in Sydney that when he wasn't at the overseas training tracks, "The information I get from heart rate and GPS (E-Trakka) saddle blankets is quite comprehensive.

"Each day I receive an emailed graph of Ortensia's workout showing the speed and distance travelled as well as the duration of her work. It also gives her heart rate throughout the workout.



ETHIOPIA: Rhys McLeod rode the stayer when second to Highly Recommended in the G2 Alister Clark Stakes (2040m) at Moonee Valley in March and, next start, first in the G1 AJC Derby (2400m) at Randwick.

"After a relatively short period of time at a new location you start to build a useful bank of data that forms norms and base figures for the horse in her new environment. It also assists in telling us how hard she is working under these new conditions.

"These norms combined with the rider's information form a picture of where she is at and whether the work is more or less testing than we may have thought."

The website *http://www.etrakka.com* also told of the benefit of technology with the 2008-09 Australian racehorse of the year, Scenic Blast—the sprinter used it at Ascot in Perth in December 2008 getting ready for his storming win in the 2009 G1 Lightning Stakes (1000m) at Flemington and revealed that he "worked hard in an explosive final 200m in 10.3sec".

The site explained: "Using the in-built GPS and heart-rate monitor, the E-Trakka® Saddle Blanket accurately records a horse's speed, position and heart rate once every second during an exercise session.

"The saddle blanket houses the GPS and heart-rate equipment. All components are integrated in the blanket and will not interfere with the horse or rider. The saddle blanket stores the information ... when convenient, the data is transferred via radio or cable to a computer program that uses mathematical algorithms to calculate meaningful fitness measurements."