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BOX DRAW MAKES FOR AN EVEN TAB GROUP 1 TOPGUN

By George Farrugia

Poke The Bear (box six) has been installed as a \$3 favourite to win Saturday's Group 1 TAB Topgun at The Meadows (525m), worth \$150,000 to the winner.

The son of Fernando Bale and Nicki Fields has the fifth fastest time ever recorded over the sprint journey (29.46), with the Seona Thompson-trained chaser having to contend with box six if he is to claim the first Group 1 victory of his career. Poke The Bear is one of two chasers engaged for Thompson, who will also put the polish on recent Adelaide Cup winner Real Simple (box seven).

Dyna Patty will exit the same box she used when winning the Group 1 Maturity at The Meadows in July, which was also the last victory of her star-studded career. The daughter of Fernando Bale and Unix Bale – one of two chasers engaged for Andrea Dailly – looked to be back in form after a very unlucky second in a semi-final of the Million Dollar Chase.

Western Australia will have two representatives with Group 1 Perth Cup winner Trouper Monelli (box two) and West On Augie (box three) – who is now in the hands of Robert Britton but owned by WA's Weston Syndicate. West On Augie's only start at The Meadows was in a heat of the Group 1 Maturity where he took a tumble, but has since enjoyed success in Victoria after winning August's Group 1 National Sprint Championship at Sandown Park.

Hecton Bale (box eight) and Hasten Slowly (box five) will renew rivalries after finishing first and second in this year's Australian Cup final. Hecton Bale will exit the same box he had in The Meadows' flagship race, where he powered away to score in 29.53.

Up Hill Jill (box four) will be looking to create history by becoming the first greyhound ever to win back-to-back Topguns. The daughter of Premier Fantasy and Where's Demonica would also push her prizemoney past the \$1 million mark – the fifth to do so in Australia.

Poco Dorado (box five) will be looking to back up her impressive Sydney Cup victory by winning the Group 2 Topgun Stayers over the 725-metre journey.

The daughter of Fernando Bale and Chica Destacada is on a five-race winning streak, with her last start in Victoria yielding a third-placed effort behind Tornado Tears and Rippin' Sam in the Group 1 National Distance Championship.

Billy's Bake (box one) and Ebby Ripper (box eight) will be lining up in their second Stayers Topgun final, with both hoping to improve on their unplaced efforts in the 2017 version.

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Three-time track record holder Champagne Sally (box four) finished third in this year's Group 1 Zoom Top behind the brilliant Fanta Bale and will be a player if she can showcase her early dash in arguably the most open Stayers Topgun since the race's inception.

This year's race (\$110,000) will be the last with a Group 2 status, with next year's event becoming a Group 1 – giving The Meadows 10 Group 1 finals in a calendar year.

GROUP ONE – TAB TOP GUN \$150,000 to the Winner

TAB Fixed Odds Market for the Top Gun:

\$150,000 to the winner Group 1 TAB Top Gun 525m

Box	Greyhound	Trainer	Price	B/T
 1	Dyna Patty (VIC)	Andrea Dailly	\$3	29.73
 2	Trouper Monelli (WA)	David Hobby	\$18	NBT
 3	West On Augie (WA)	Rob Britton	\$9	NBT
 4	Up Hill Jill (VIC)	David Geall	\$6	29.89
 5	Hasten Slowly (VIC)	Angela Langton	\$8	30.01
 6	Poke The Bear (VIC)	Seona Thompson	\$3.50	29.46
 7	Real Simple (VIC)	Seona Thompson	\$16	30.20
 8	Hecton Bale (VIC)	Andrea Dailly	\$5	29.53
 9	My Redeemer (VIC) (RES)	David Geall	\$6	29.90
 10	Jury (QLD) (RES)	Tony Brett	\$18	NBT

Local expert's selections for the TAB TOPGUN final are as follows.

Ron Hawkswell

1st Poke The Bear
2nd West On Augie
3rd Dyna Patty

Eddie Caruana

1st Dyna Patty
2nd Hecton Bale
3rd Poke The Bear

Rob Testa

1st Dyna Patty
2nd Poke The Bear
3rd Hecton Bale

George Farrugia

1st Dyna Patty
2nd Poke The Bear
3rd Hecton Bale

Topgun Timeline

- 1993** First Topgun run. Victorian champions Worth Backing and Golden Currency defy wet and cold conditions to finish in a dead heat. Revealing finished a further four inches away in third. Worth Backing and Golden Currency split the \$40,000 winner's purse.
- 1994** Topgun held at Olympic Park. Winner's purse increased to \$50,000.
- 1995** Rapid Hiker sets new track record on old Sandown Park track.
- 1996** First place prizemoney increased to \$70,000.
- 1997** Greyhounds from Ireland, the UK and United States compete against Australia's best.
- 1998** Race elevated to Group 2 status.
- 1999** Race elevated to Group 1 status.
- 2000** Prizemoney increased to \$100,000 to the winner.

- 2003** Bombastic Shiraz completes Triple Crown – claiming the Shootout, Melbourne Cup and Topgun.
- 2004** Whisky Assassin, drawn favourably in box 8, sets new Sandown Park track record – 29.40 seconds.
- 2005** Prizemoney increased to \$125,000 to the winner.
- 2008** Race finds a permanent home at the Meadows after both Metro clubs agree to a new feature race structure. Previously the Topgun had alternated between the MGRA and Sandown.
- 2009** Superstar winner El Galo is disqualified after returning a positive swab and the race is awarded to Regal Thyme the first reserve, he gained a start in box one following the scratching of the injured Queenslander Knocka Norris.
- 2009** Victorian and Australian Greyhound of the year Cindeen Shelby rounded out her outstanding year with an all the way win defeating a classy field in 2009 Topgun.
- 2010** Another Victorian and Australian Greyhound of the Year El Grand Senor proved what a great champion he was with an outstanding Top Gun win, he led all the way in 29.83.
- 2011** Legendary Victorian Hall of Fame trainer Graeme Bate won one of the few events he hadn't before secured. His extraordinary year continued when Allen Harper took out the Top Gun. He proved too good after finding the early lead. The Wheeler – Bate combination not only supplied the winner but runner-up as well with Radley Bale. It was a memorable night for the unstoppable team.
- 2012** Rank outsider David Bale (\$31.20) caused one of the biggest boilovers in Group 1 history, running down kennelmate Desalle Bale in the shadows of the post to win the Sky Racing TOPGUN in 29.92.
- 2013** West Australian star Dyna Nalin (\$9.00) gave the Wheeler family a historic third consecutive Topgun victory with a brilliant come-from-behind 29.89 win in the Group 1 classic.
- 2014** Australian Cup winner Buckle Up Wes (\$6.30) staked his claim as Tasmania's greatest ever Greyhound after winning the Group 1 Topgun. He also became the first greyhound to win the Australian Cup – Topgun double.
- 2015** Superstar Fernando Bale's scorching all-the-way winning time of 29.57 a race record at the Meadows was enough to win the \$150,000 first prize and stretch his unbeaten run in Group 1 finals to eight, a record that was unprecedented and will likely stand forever, particularly on the sprint circuit.
- 2016** Dundee Osprey won the 2016 Group 1 Sky Racing Topgun (525m) at The Meadows, the biggest win of his outstanding career.
The \$215,000 race went to script for the powerful greyhound, as he got a dream run into the first corner and settled in third position behind pacy duo Aston Bolero and Pantera Nera.
From there Dundee Osprey (Fabregas – Dundee Rose) was always going to be hard to beat, and he proved too strong winning by three lengths over Aston Bolero, with Pantera Nera third in 29.99sec.
- 2017** Victorian star Up Hill Jill claimed a thoroughly deserved and overdue Group 1 breakthrough on one of Australian greyhound racing's greatest stages, with a brilliant all-the-way victory in the Group 1 Sky Racing Topgun at The Meadows in 2017.
After winning the Group 2 Sandown Laurels in December 2016, the ultra-consistent speedster had been a regular in feature events throughout 2017, but frustratingly for trainer Dave Geall and owner/breeder wife Rose a second Group title has proven elusive. However, on Top Gun night she finally did it in style leading all the way at \$13 recording 29.89.

Listed below are the past Top Gun winners since the race commenced in 1993.

Year	Winner	State	Trainer	Time	Track
1993	Worth Backing	(VIC)	Carl Haas	30.56	Sandown Park
	Golden Currency	(VIC)	Kevin Mugavin Jnr	DH	
1994	New Fox	(NSW)	Dennis Reid	29.98	Olympic Park
1995	Rapid Hiker	(VIC)	Philip Newman	29.80	Sandown Park
1996	Wylie Boy	(VIC)	George Rose	30.09	Sandown Park
1997	Chicago Blue	(VIC)	Brian Furness	30.00	Sandown Park

1998	Rapid Journey	(NSW)	Jane Carruthers	29.85	Sandown Park
1999	Mint Magic	(NSW)	Ray Watson	29.97	Meadows
2000	Placard	(NSW)	Ruth King	29.92	Sandown Park
2001	No Intent	(VIC)	Jason Thompson	30.17	Meadows
2002	Lindale Blue	(WA)	Colin Bainbridge	29.76	Sandown Park
2003	Bombastic Shiraz	(VIC)	Darren Cairns	30.06	Meadows
2004	Whisky Assassin	(VIC)	Jason Thompson	29.40	Sandown Park
2005	Black Enforcer	(QLD)	Tony Brett	30.02	Meadows
2006	Jaimandy Coops	(VIC)	Paul Donohue	29.60	Sandown Park
2007	Meticulous	(VIC)	Mario Briganti	29.88	Meadows
2008	Regal Thyme	(VIC)	Graeme Long	29.75	Meadows
2009	Cindeen Shelby	(VIC)	Kelvyn Greenough	29.75	Meadows
2010	El Grand Senor	(VIC)	Carolyn Jones	29.83	Meadows
2011	Allen Harper	(VIC)	Graeme Bate	29.82	Meadows
2012	David Bale	(VIC)	Graeme Bate	29.92	Meadows
2013	Dyna Nalin	(WA)	Paul Stuart	29.89	Meadows
2014	Buckle Up Wes	(TAS)	Ted Medhurst	30.02	Meadows
2015	Fernando Bale	(VIC)	Andrea Dailly	29.57	Meadows
2016	Dundee Osprey	(VIC)	Geoff Scott-Smith	29.99	Meadows
2017	Up Hill Jill	(VIC)	David Geall	29.89	Meadows

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Thanks for information supplied by George Farrugia M.G.R.A. Publicity Officer

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