

Our Proud Olympic History

Melbourne 1956

Eventing

Brian Crago

Wyatt Thompson

Ern Barker

A.Jacobs

The first Australian Equestrian Team sailed out of Perth in January 1955 on the six-week voyage to England. David Wood, Brian Crago, Ernie Barker, John Winchester and Bunty Thompson were to represent Australia at the 1956 Olympic Games. Their trainer was Franz Mairinger and he had quite a job to do in the fifteen months before the Games as none of the Eventing Team (Wood, Crago, Winchester and Thompson) had ever done dressage before let alone competed in a three-day event. Their first and only three day-event before the Olympic Games was to be Badminton, where they were also required to qualify for the Games.

Hard work and steely determination paid off for our trailblazers. Against all odds the Eventing Team (which no longer included John Winchester) not only qualified but surprised the world by finishing a proud fourth at the 1956 Olympic Games. *Sydney's Daily Telegraph* reported: "For a country which never before competed in Olympic equestrian events, Australia's effort was remarkable. It will enhance Australia's reputation for horsemanship throughout the world."

The remarkable achievement of the 1956 Olympic Team set the precedent for all the Australian equestrian teams to follow.



The 1956 Equestrian Team: David Wood, Bert Jacobs, Brian Crago, Ernie Barker, John Winchester, Bunty Thompson