

Still plenty in the tank

TOBY PRIME

JUST like his 1971 Chrysler by Chrysler, Bob Kuchenmeister is still ticking over.

Kuchenmeister, 80, has recently returned to the winner's circle, driving two winners in the space of a month after not scoring for three years.

The Inverleigh trainer-driver had a thrill when he drove Leanne Leeann first past the post on Sunday at Maryborough's Redwood Day, which is the biggest day on the trotting calendar.

He said the win was "a bit of a burst".

"I've got a good driving form at the moment. I think it goes: second, first, third, second, first," Kuchenmeister said. "That's not bad."

Kuchenmeister, who has been involved in the sport for five decades, said Leanne Leeann was difficult to train but she had good prospects.

"I've got time to work with a pain," he said.

"She still kicks and bites. That's just part of her but she's got a future, I think."

Kuchenmeister has 12 acres about 30 minutes out of Geelong with three horses, which keep him busy at his age.

The former cab and limousine driver has only recently considered giving it away.



Redwood Day winner Bob Kuchenmeister with horse Leanne Leeann and owners Brooke Sadler and her mother Jan McLennan; and (above right) Kuchenmeister with his trusty 1971 Chrysler.



It's what he uses to tow the float to various meetings across the state.

"I won't sell it," he said.

"I promised it to my lad. He loves it and he said, 'I'm going to restore it to original'."

Kuchenmeister hopes to remain in the sulky for a little while yet.

"I can look at horses in a race sometimes and say, 'That one's not going to make the distance' ... or something else is going to make a break," he said.

"You might outmanoeuvre a young fella or lock him up for a bit — and they'll go crook."

"By the same token, some of those young guys are pretty clever at what they do — and they're gamer than I am. Some of them are pretty smart."

"What keeps you going is a horse like Leanne Leeann."

"I like doing it and I can do it," he said.

"There is another reason. I've got a lot of mates that aren't with us anymore.

"Some of them were older when they died but a lot of them were 65 to 75 and they retired — and what did they do? They sat down in an arm-

chair and watched television. I get up at 5am, get out and feed those horses and I start work."

The 1971 Chrysler by Chrysler has seen many roads across

Australia and the body has done more than a million kilometres. Under the bonnet is made up of parts from other vehicles.