

STARLOOKS



Ralph Lauren suede jacket, 4-14, \$1399, Country Road wool vest, 6-16, \$80, and cotton T-shirt, 6-16, \$40, and Burberry cotton trousers, 4-16, \$369, all from David Jones, 133 357. Gai's own jewellery.

HAIR BY BRAD MULLINS. MAKE-UP BY ANNETTE MCKENZIE FOR MECCA COSMETICA. ALL PRICES ARE APPROXIMATE.



Burberry taffeta trench coat, 4-16, \$2299, silk cotton top, 4-16, \$679, and taffeta skirt, 4-16, \$929, all from David Jones, 133 357. Gai's own belt, shoes and jewellery.



Gai Waterhouse WINNING STYLE

Long regarded as the undisputed queen of Australian racetracks, Gai Waterhouse is both a trainer of champion horses and a fashion icon, writes **Michael Sheather**.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HUGH STEWART STYLING BY JUDITH COOK



Country Road wool viscose blazer, 6-16, \$299, Paul Smith silk cashmere cardigan, XS-L, \$699, and Ralph Lauren cotton skirt, 4-14, \$649, all from David Jones, 133 357. Gai's own jewellery.

TABLE AND CHAIR FROM COUNTRY TRADER. PORTRAIT OF TOMMY "T.J." SMITH BY RAYMOND L. SKIPP, 1987.

Gai Waterhouse loves the racing game. "I love the friendship. I love the teamwork. I love the people," she says. "I love making the horse, turning a sow's ear into a silk purse. And I simply love winning."

Indeed, winning is something of a habit with Gai. Once named a Living National Treasure by the National Trust, Gai has trained 98 Group One winners in a 19-year career – in faster time than her famous father – making her the fourth most successful trainer in Australian history. She expects to punch through the magical 100 barrier before the end of the year.

"The Lady Trainer", as Gai, 56, often refers to herself, is the doyenne of the racetrack, a unique mix of steel and style, who has carved her own distinctive and

colourful niche in an industry dominated by men in grey, ill-fitting suits.

Gai, a former model and actress, runs her life and business according to the four Ds – determination, dedication, devotion and discipline – and is almost as famous for her colourful flair and race day hats as she is for her winning way with horses.

"It must be the actress in me because I like dressing up," says Gai. "I love colour and really making an effort, especially at the races. The clothes I wear to the races, I only wear to the races and nowhere else. I love the sense of occasion. Away from the track, I dress quite differently. I'm much more understated."

"And as for my hats, I only started wearing them because I get cold sores very easily and they can be set off by

exposure to the sun, so there is a reason why I started wearing them and then they became associated with me. But they look lovely at the races and they really make your outfit."

Gai attributes at least part of her sense of style to her mother, Valerie, who died in 2008, aged 92. "Mum was a great dresser," says Gai. "She loved to dress up and she had a lovely sense of style, a great sense of wearing clothes and colour, and she instilled that in me from a very early age."

Gai says that her mother had wonderful clothes, many of which she has kept and occasionally still wears.

"These are vintage and absolutely beautiful," she says. "There is an amazing jewelled top that I adore and still wear sometimes because it's such a wonderful piece."

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Ralph Lauren silk linen cardigan, 4-14, \$579, and Chloé silk dress, 36-42, \$4999, both from David Jones, 133 357. Gai's own jewellery.

All prices are approximate.

The Waterhouses are, of course, synonymous with horse racing. Theirs is a family dynasty. Gai is the daughter of legendary trainer Tommy "T.J." Smith and is the owner, trainer and leading hand at her famous Sydney stable, Tulloch Lodge, where, as a young woman and Tommy's apprentice, she would exercise the horses and muck out the stalls.

Gai's husband, Robbie, once warned off racecourses for his part in the Fine Cotton scandal in 1984, is now one of Sydney's best-known bookmakers. Their son, Tom, is a bookmaker in Melbourne, while daughter Kate is a well-connected trackside socialite and a newspaper columnist.

Gai's daily routine is punishing, beginning at 2.30am, when she rolls out of bed to face the day. "I make myself

something to eat and then make something for my darling husband, Robbie, usually a small cake with a smiley face on it," says Gai, who then speaks with her stable foreman for an update on the condition of the horses, before heading out to the track to begin her training schedule. "If you're into the routine, it's all right, but once you step outside the routine, you realise how crazy it all is," she says. "Still, you do get to see some truly beautiful sunrises."

Despite those terrible hours and the sometimes all-too-chilly mornings, Gai says she will keep training horses until she runs out of ambition.

"It's in my blood," she says, "and I'll keep doing it until the day I go to roll out of bed at 2.30am and then decide to roll back and give my husband a cuddle." ■



Gai: *In My Words* by Gai Waterhouse, published by The Slattery Media Group, \$50, is available from October 1.