Well I suppose this year’s trip to Victoria had me singing along to ‘always look on the bright side of life…’ In December I travelled to Werribee together with Meg Walker and Rocky to compete at a few shows and the Dressage Festival. The responsible adults we are, we also stole one of Dressage Tas’s young riders; Sarah Beltz for the trip to show horse nationals. My mare Bellini (Binks to her friends), had qualified in early 2015 for show horse nationals, so due to the timing of events we also spent the year qualifying to attend the Dressage Festival at medium level.

We arrived at Werribee together with the ET show team and got settled in to the sounds of John Farnham, Daryl Braithwaite and the Black Sorrows spilling over from the mansion concert. Not such a bad day to arrive! For the next week we were in show mode getting the horses ready for the indoor.

Anyone who knows Bink, knows that she is a bit of a princess. Unfortunately this was not to be our time to shine. Whilst she has been to Werribee a couple of times before, this time she didn’t travel quite so well and just could not settle. Part way through the week this developed to chronic box walking during daylight hours, so to help resolve this she got turfed into the outdoor yards to keep her semi happy. Ridden wise, she was similarly worked up into a tight spring. Hacks around the x-country course sort of helped, but she was not coping anywhere near the sheds.

Whilst Bink struggled, it was pleasing to see that Meg, Sarah and Rocky were handling things like pros. Show horse nationals were soon over. With the help of many people, I got the princess in the ring, however we skipped the presentation for safety’s sake! We had our achievement, and despite her carry on she somehow seemed to accumulate some fans. Next was some turnout at Tassie ex-pat’s; Catherine Davies’ place for some well needed time out.

On return we scored a change in box to hopefully manage her distaste of the old one. We also were able to get a local vet chiro to come and see her. Success! I now had a horse that was relaxing and sleeping!

During this week Meg and I were also joined by Meegan Daun and Archie, Caitlin Radford and Bucky, as well as Peter Fischer ready for the dressage festival to begin. We packed up ‘most’ of our makeup and got ready for bootcamp. Given the previous week, our aim for this week was just to relax Bink and try to keep her focus in the new environment. At this point I didn’t care much about the competition.

I learnt a lot during this time in just breaking down our goals and paying attention to all the positive achievements. Taking a breath, how much I could actually cope with, what I had, what I was missing, how much I could ride through, and when to not push anymore! Again our achievement for the week was getting her in the arena. Scores were predictably poor given the tests we performed; however what I learnt in terms of management, our strengths and weaknesses made up for this and I walked away from it all feeling very positive. It’s nice to remember it’s not always about the score.

Whilst that was my story, the other part of the trip was about supporting the ‘team’. The fat max was quickly dug out from storage to give Archie a makeover complete with quarter marks (which if you didn’t know is the ‘IN’ thing in dressage atm). This was definitely the only reason he placed in the PSG….. Meg did a great job on the now tired (from trashing his stable) Rocky. Caitlin and Bucky also had a good competition, however unfortunately I didn’t get to see any of their tests due to timings.

The GP Freestyle is always a good one to watch, and it’s very positive to see so many Australian combinations growing. As the owner of a diva mare, it is no surprise that my favourite combination to watch is Maree and Diamantina. I last saw them together at WEG, and it was pleasing to see that Her Highness is looking more and more comfortable in the Werribee Shed. Well until the prize giving…..then it became apparent that she and Bink must have been snapchatting videos of their indoor performances to each other. Glad I’m not the only one!!!