



The style of Adam Bodey as he issues the challenge at Yea.

requirements have meant tracks that were once perilous are now safe.

"All the tracks have come up to scratch. The days of having no outside running rail are virtually non-existent. They've even put up a plastic rail at Healesville," Bodey said.

The atmosphere, he says, is "awesome", the usually tight, undulating tracks challenging. "I've ridden some amazing racetracks in the last 15 years," he said.

"Some, to be honest, are, or were, pretty horrible.

"Alexandra I'd class as unique. I remember riding there when I was young and green and I thought it was horrifying, really tight and downhill. Now I quite like it.

"I model myself on Damien Oliver, I reckon he's the duck's guts. But I'd like to see him riding around a track like Alexandra. Some of those boys would have one look at some of these tracks and say 'bugger that'."

Fields sizes are increasing, the gap in quality between the hapless picnic nags and the serious racehorses of the city and provincial circuit is shrinking.

"The days of jumpers running about at the picnics to get fit are pretty much gone," Bodey said. "There was so much racing over Christmas I thought the field sizes would drop off. We had a triple header from Boxing Day onwards, the 27th and 28th, yet the fields stayed strong."

For Bodey, the appeal of picnic racing is its relaxed point of difference. There is nothing elite about it.

"There are no restrictions. For the crowd, it's just easy. You can walk in in thongs and a tank top. There wouldn't be a collar anywhere. Not everyone can afford to go to the races and pay seven dollars for a Crownie. That's what makes the picnics so appealing. You can go to the IGA, buy a slab and take it to the races."

Average horses become popular, almost cult heroes.

"I rode a horse called Seto Sapphire last season. He won a heap of races at Woolamai and became a real crowd favorite, just like the good horses do. He was no Weekend Hussler but the crowds loved him."

Bodey, whose regular income comes from riding trackwork for Rod Douglas at

Cranbourne and pre-training and horse breaking at a property at Kooweerup, reckons the "Big Four-0" might see him out.

He paid \$1000 for a trophy cabinet about a year ago because the dozens of Cup trophies he'd won over the last decade, including "four or five at Drouin and half a dozen at Yea," were strewn all over his house.

There's not much room for more.

In the off-season Bodey's weight creeps up to about 72kg, nine kilograms more than the picnic minimum.

"I'll still ride while the hunger is there. One day I might wake up and say bugger it, I'm sick of dieting. But there's no sign of that, or losing my nerve. I think I can ride 'til I'm 40.

"Riding 50 winners in a season, I doubt that's ever been done before. And I still want to ride the card."

Before finally cracking the 50-win mark, he had twice ridden 49 winners and has twice failed by one to ride the card on six-race picnic cards. And he's won every Cup bar Swift's Creek and Omeo at least once.

For Bodey, the perfect day is a day at the picnic races.

"Some of the best days of my life have been when I've been riding. Me and Kristi will take the kids (Tayla and Jade) to the races, often towing one of ours in the float. The drives to some of those meetings are absolutely beautiful," he said.

"I'll ride a few winners, the missus will drive home and I'll have a couple of coldies. It doesn't get any better than that." ■

PICNIC PREMIERSHIP AS AT 17 MARCH									
Jockey Name	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	Starts	Prize Money	S/Rate	
1 ADAM BODEY	53	32	17	15	10	139	\$68,684	38.12	
2 Leigh Taylor	13	19	16	10½	11	83	\$27,456	15.66	
3 Kane Harris	12	13	4	4	4	41	\$18,538	29.26	
4 Craig Kirkpatrick	11	6	5	8	9	66	\$17,650	16.66	

COUNTRY PREMIERSHIP AS AT 17 MARCH									
Jockey Name	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	Starts	Prize Money	S/Rate	
1 Linda Meech	61½	56½	51	42	33	464	\$753,723	13.14	
2 Dean Yendall	57	38	53	43	45	407	\$806,064	14.00	
3 ADAM BODEY	53	32	17	15	10	139	\$68,684	38.12	
4 Brad Rawiller	51	40	40	37	18	266	\$827,527	19.17	
5 Brady Cross	51	30½	18½	26½	30½	292	\$525,790	17.46	

Tables showing the dominance of Adam Bodey on the picnic circuit. Without having ridden on the TAB circuit, he is still lying third on the overall country table with a dominant strike rate.

