

## **Saddling up for a \$15,000 prize pool**

### **Jamie First**

Modewarre student Stephanie Thornton is bucking her studies to saddle up this weekend.

The 15-year-old is taking part in the inaugural Racing Victoria Off The Track Triequithon on Saturday.

The event will see retired racehorses competing in three disciplines, including dressage, cross-country and showjumping, in between races at Mornington.

The riders, aged between 15 and 40, will be vying for a prize pool totalling \$15,000, one of the biggest rewards for a competition of this sort.

Racing Victoria chief executive Bernard Saundry said the triequithon helps promote older horses as ideal equestrian competitors.

"Thousands of racehorses have gone on to successful eventing careers after their retirement from the track," Mr Saundry said.

"They are highly versatile animals and we have witnessed extraordinary results on the Australian eventing circuit."

Riding since she was three, Stephanie said her father, trainer Glenn Thornton, has had a big influence on her equine career.

"He's taught me how to ride over the years, working my way from ponies to where I am now," Stephanie said.

Having participated in competitions from the age of seven, Stephanie said she was most excited about taking her horse, Dunking, back to the track.

Practising almost four hours a day, all she wants is her mount to complete the event the best he can.

"He's very well behaved, but I just hope he gets around the course with ease and without any troubles."

Keeping it in the family, brother Boris, who is an apprentice jockey, will also compete on the day, but in the races.

There is no rivalry between them, but Stephanie said she's still deciding whether she would like to follow in Boris's footsteps and join the jockey training program.