



Official Truck of the WPCA

The Official Newsletter of the World Professional Chuckwagon Association

# TURNING THE BARRELS

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### PHOTO CREDITS

Photos in this issue by Paul and Carol Easton, Fred Vidiuk Photography and Ed Wittchen.

### PARTNER SUPPORT

Thanks to GMC for providing each Tour stop winner with a leather jacket.



## One for the Archives



*Lisa Bensmiller was presented the 2016 Ty Tournier Memorial Award by Sue Fraser at the WPCA Annual Awards Night at the Grey Eagle Resort and Casino.*

*Photo by Paul and Carol Easton*



## WPCA 2016 Awards: Supporters

AFTER A BUSY season on the track and on the road, it's good to bring together the WPCA family to celebrate. The 2016 WPCA Annual Awards Night was held on October 22 at the Grey Eagle Resort and Casino. Over 300 people attended this year's event, including WPCA members and their families and friends, as well as many sponsors and partners.

Longtime track announcer **Les McIntyre** (below) served as the MC for the evening and did an excellent job, as usual.

**Tammy Kristiansen**, the WPCA Director of Partnerships and Administration, must also be recognized for her hard work and dedication in putting together this special evening of celebration. Photographer **Shellie Scott** was also a tremendous help, particularly with her role in providing framed photographs to all of the major award winners.



The evening started with Les recognizing our Tour sponsors and partners. Without their support, it wouldn't be possible for the Tour to operate.

**Tom Barrow**, WPCA General Manager, presented a plaque of appreciation to **Christa Paterson**, GMC Fleet Account Manager (right). GMC has been the presenting sponsor and the official truck of the Tour since 2012.



WPCA Director of Marketing **Bryan Hebson** presented a plaque to Western Financial Group's **Liane Sabourin**, Commercial Account Executive (left). Western Financial Group is the WPCA's official insurance company.



For the past two years, Grey Eagle Resort and Casino has been the official home for the WPCA. **Rhonda Whitney** was on hand to accept a plaque from WPCA Vice President **John Lee** (left). Grey Eagle

Resort and Casino was also thanked for donating the event centre space for the awards gala.

Bryan Hebson recognized **Greg Hitchner**, owner of Olson Silver Company (below) for its support of the WPCA. Olson Silver is the official buckle supplier of the WPCA





## WPCA 2016 Awards: Supporters

and the title sponsor of the Battle for the Buckles contest heard on radio broadcasts of *WPCA Pro Tour Live* during the race season.

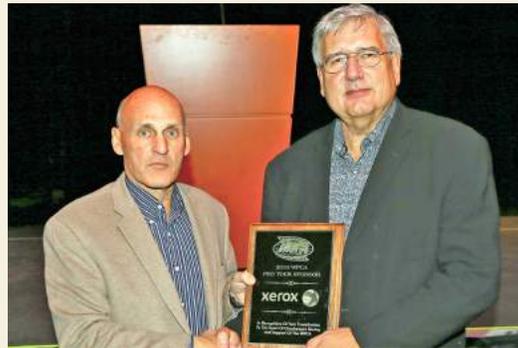
**Billy Melville**, co-host of *WPCA Pro Tour Live*, recognized **Fortis Alberta**, represented by **Mona Bartsoff**, Corporate Communications Advisor (right, top), for their nightly sponsorship of the Fortis results wrap-up segment on Rural Radio SiriusXM Channel 147.



Tom Barrow presented (at right) a plaque to **Greg Vogel**, Sales Manager of Summit Fleet. Summit was the WPCA's partner in supplying GMC trucks for the Grande Prairie Stompede, the Ponoka Stompede and the 2016 world champion truck.



**Ed Wittchen**, WPCA President, recognized Xerox Canada as the official printer of the WPCA, represented by recently retired Director of Western Canada Sales Agent Operations **Randy Brydges** (above).



John Lee presented a plaque to **Anita Rathier**, Designated Professional for Meyers Norris Penny (top right corner). Meyers Norris Penny has been a supporting partner of the WPCA for over 10 years.



Not every partner was able to attend but the WPCA also recognized Wrangler as the official shirts and jeans supplier, and Vold, Jones and Vold as the official auctioneers.

**Ken Malvin**, the CEO of KMC Sales and WPCA merchandise trailer operator (above), spoke about his Racing for Fort Mac initiative this season. Ken sold t-shirts with the logo during the race season. Profits went to the Fort McMurray Salvation Army to support the community and families devastated by the wildfires in Fort McMurray.



## WPCA 2016 Awards: Supporters

President Ed Wittchen presented the 2016 WPCA Media Award to Tom Barrow and Bryan Hebson (right). Tom and Bryan brought live chuckwagon racing and behind-the-scenes interviews to fans through a livestream feed on Facebook, which had over 350,000 views. The Media Award buckles are sponsored by Billy Melville Productions.

Tom Barrow presented the Race Committee Award to **Terri Ellen Sudnik**, Grande Prairie Committee President, and **Phil Troyer**, committee member (right), who were accepting on behalf of the Grande Prairie Stompede Committee. The committee received the award for its outstanding efforts in accommodating the WPCA, its members and fans of the sport, and for supporting its overall sustainability.

Former Ty Tournier Memorial Award winner **Sue Fraser** presented this year's award to **Lisa Bensmiller**. The award, sponsored by **Lynn and Steve Fountain**, goes to a woman involved in and dedicated to the sport and who displays nurturing and caring of people and horses. The award symbolizes Ty's legacy, "The Spirit of the Thoroughbred—Courage and Strength." Sue described Lisa as a daughter, wife and mother who grew up tough in a male-dominated chuckwagon family. Sue also said that Lisa is friendly,



talented, productive, efficient, hard working, conscientious, industrious, sociable, diligent, devoted and tireless.

The crowd was very receptive to the memorial video produced by Billy and **Eddie Melville**. This video pays tribute to the former drivers, outriders and officials who died this year, a list that included active supporter **Bruce Larway**, former chuckwagon drivers **Don Chapin** and **Fred Weisenburger**, and chuckwagon judges **Bill Vipond** and **Bob Pollitt**.

**Gary Gross**, WPCA track announcer in Saskatoon and Rocky Mountain House, presented the Active Supporter Award. This goes to individuals or companies that have shown great interest in wagon racing and have contributed through their involvement and dedication to the WPCA.

The first Active Supporter Award went to Happy Trails RV, where **Frank Halvies** has been a longtime supporter of the Dash for Cash as well as a tarp sponsor. The second award went to **Merv Pidherney** (pictured at left with his wife **Earlyne Pidherney** and Tom Barrow), who has been a tarp sponsor

since 2007. He has also supported the Rocky Mountain House Battle of the Rockies since 2010, and sponsored tarps at the Calgary Stampede and Ponoka Stampede. The third award went to Trail Blazer RV; **Kim and Keith Graham** have been tarp sponsors for over two decades and have supported over 10 drivers this way. As well, for the last three years they have been title sponsors of the Ponoka Stampede Tommy Dorchester \$50,000 Dash for Cash.



## WPCA 2016 Awards: Competitors

THIS YEAR, EACH Tour stop winner received a leather jacket from GMC (right). **Christa Paterson**, GMC Fleet Account Manager, and **Mathieu Vallieres**, GMC District Manager Calgary and Area, presented jackets to

- Grande Prairie champion **Kurt Bensmiller**
- Saskatoon champion **Vern Nolin**
- Medicine Hat champion **Doug Irvine**
- High River champion **Mark Sutherland**
- Ponoka champion **Colt Cosgrave**
- Bonnyville & Dawson Creek champion **Luke Tournier**
- Strathmore champion **Gary Gorst**
- Rocky Mountain House champion **Chad Harden**



The WPCA Clean Drive Award goes to the driver with the highest points and the least amount of penalties. **Dustin Gorst**, this year's winner, ran without penalties on 36 of the 40 nights of racing. In fact, he only picked up four seconds in penalties all year; only two of those were driver penalties. In a sport that prides itself on safety and sportsmanship, Dustin can certainly be proud of his driving performance on the track during the 2016 season. **Ken Malvin**, CEO of KMC Sales, sponsored the jacket and buckle for this award and presented it to Dustin (below left).



The 2016 WPCA Top Rookie Outrider is **Ethan Motowylo** from Blufton, Alberta (with **Chance Flad**, below right).

This award is for the outrider who earns the most points in their first full year on the Tour. A second-generation chuckwagon competitor, Ethan's first taste of outriding came at the demonstration race at the Battle of the Rockies in 2015 when he was just 14 years old. Proving he was ready to begin his chuckwagon career, Ethan made his first official ride behind his father **Obrey Motowylo** at the 2016 Grande Prairie Stompede, where he just missed the championship final heat and helped his father win day money on the final night. Ethan's calm demeanor and his

horsemanship skills quickly caught the attention of driver **Troy Flad**, who wisely secured the young outrider's services for the rest of the year. As Ethan's confidence and experience increased, he took on additional mounts outriding for **Layne MacGillivray** at the



Ponoka Stampede and ended the year in Rocky Mountain House by riding for



## WPCA 2016 Awards: Competitors

**Layne Bremner** and **Roger Moore** to finish up the year in 12th spot overall.

The Top Rookie Driver Award goes to the driver placing the highest on his first full year on the Tour. The 2016 WPCA Top Rookie Driver is **Cody Fraser** of Wetaskiwin,



Alberta. The award was presented to Cody by **Greg Hitchner** of Olson Silver Company (left). Cody, a fourth-generation driver and the son of two-time WPCA world champion **Rick Fraser**, began his career with a

bang by winning his first-ever show at the Dawson Creek Exhibition in 2014 as a member of the Western Chuckwagon Association. He attended and won the 2015 WPCA qualification runoff, which made him eligible for the 2016 WPCA Tour. Cody's first year on the Tour saw him post five runs in the top 10, including three in the top 5. Undoubtedly the highlight for Cody came during the Ponoka Stampede, where he won his first career day money on night three en route to winning the Ponoka average title and a spot in the prestigious \$50,000 Tommy Dorchester Final Heat.

The Import Tool Corporation Equine Outfit of Excellence was developed by outrider **Eddie Melville**. It was designed to recognize the outstanding achievements of the true athletes of wagon racing, the thoroughbred horses. (Watch for stories on each horse in the next newsletter.) The 2016 Equine Outfit of Excellence (shown in framed photos held by the owners at top right corner) is



- Right Leader **Cujo** (owned by Colt Cosgrave)
- Left Leader **Gage** (owned by Doug Irvine)
- Right Wheeler **Tommy** (owned by Gary Gorst)
- Left Wheeler **Dorchy** (owned by **John Walters**)
- Outriding **Wino** (owned by **Codey McCurrach**)
- Outriding **Brock** (owned by Luke Tournier)



The 2016 Rod Glass Memorial Award for Most Improved Outrider went to **Dayton Sutherland**, who is from DeWinton, Alberta. Dayton received his award from outrider **Chad Cosgrave** (left). This year saw Dayton improve four spots from 2015 and finish

with a career best of eighth place in the world standings. Dayton teamed up with his father Mark Sutherland to capture the Guy Weadick Days championship in High River, and helped his uncle **Kirk Sutherland** qualify for



## WPCA 2016 Awards: Competitors

the championship final heat at the Battle of the North in Dawson Creek. He increased his mounts per night on the Tour and was a regular stove man behind **Mitch Sutherland** (his cousin), **Darcy Flad**, **Evan Salmond** and John Walters. He also helped John Walters to qualify for the final eight showdown at the Calgary Stampede.

The 2016 Herman Flad Memorial Award for Most Improved Driver went to **Chad Fike** of Cremona, Alberta. The award was presented to Chad by WPCA General Manager **Tom Barrow** (left). This year saw Chad, a fourth-generation wagon man, post several top 10 runs along with five runs that cracked the top 5. Consistency was Chad's calling card in 2016 as he posted top-12 overall finishes at Saskatoon, Ponoka and Strathmore, along with a



season-best eighth-place finish at Bonnyville. Overall, this former WPCA Top Rookie Driver and 2012 outriding world champion improved six spots from 2015 to finish a personal best 17th place in the WPCA world standings. This marks the fifth major award that this young superstar has received since his chuckwagon career started in 2005.

The WPCA Past Member Tribute recognizes a past member for their outstanding achievements, dedication or contributions related to the WPCA and wagon racing. This year **Reg Johnstone** was recognized. Reg began his illustrious career in 1976 at Drumheller when **Orville Strandquist** invited him to give wagon racing a try. Reg only had four horses at the time, so he had to borrow some to compete. He didn't even make it out of the infield in his

first race. It wasn't long, however, until Reg, who later became known as the Bashaw Flash, was a force on the circuit. Reg was known for his ability to drive horses that proved troublesome and couldn't be handled by others, and for his extraordinary skills on the barrel turns.

Reg is still the only rookie driver to ever qualify for the final heat at the Calgary Stampede. He will forever hold the track record on an old Calgary Stampede racetrack. Reg was a founding member of the WPCA back in 1981. He was the 2005 world champion driver, a three-time Ponoka



Stampede champion and the Calgary Stampede Aggregate winner in 2011. He has in excess of 35 major victories and boasts victories in five consecutive decades. He has qualified for the GMC Rangeland Derby's winner-take-all final four times, the Ponoka Stampede's winner-take-all final three times and the Grande Prairie Stompede's winner-take-all final nine times. His career total of 28 winner-take-all championship final heats in his career ranks him seventh of all time among WPCA drivers. Reg's award was presented to him by WPCA President **Ed Wittchen** (above).

**Reg Willick** has been a longtime sponsor and supporter of the Gorst chuckwagon team. He has been the key player in



## WPCA 2016 Awards: Competitors



making the Saskatoon show a success. He provides financial support, brings in additional tarp sponsors and provides equipment when needed. Reg is truly dedicated to the sport and its western heritage. For his service, Reg was this year's Jim Bottomley Chuckwagon Person of the Year. He received his award, a bronze sponsored by Roadtrek, from Ed Wittchen (above).

For the third year in a row, **Chance Flad** of Hughendon, Alberta, is the world champion outrider. He received his award from **Randy Cripps** of Bush Ape Supervision (right). He stood at fourth in the standings following the first Tour stop at the Stompede in Grande Prairie. Following Saskatoon, Chance jumped up to second place in the standings, behind the leader **Rory Gervais**. He maintained that position heading to the Ponoka Stampede, where he vaulted to the top of the standings by 280 points to finish off the first half of the season. The 2016 Calgary Stampede proved to be a successful one for Chance, as he was a



member of the Kirk Sutherland team that won both the prestigious Richard Cosgrave Memorial and the \$100,000 final heat. The second half of the 2016 season saw the standings tighten up as Rory Gervais posted high-point performances in Bonnyville and Strathmore to close the gap to just 28 points heading to the Battle of the North in Dawson Creek. In the end, Chance successfully defended his title after an exciting yearlong battle, with Rory Gervais claiming runner-up status. Overall, Chance won five Tour shows, outriding behind Vern Nolin at Saskatoon, Doug Irvine at Medicine Hat, Colt Cosgrave at Ponoka, and Luke Tournier at Bonnyville and Dawson Creek.

The 2016 world champion chuckwagon driver is Luke Tournier of Duck Lake, Saskatchewan (pictured below with his world championship jacket presented by Ken Malvin). Since joining the WPCA Pro Tour in 2003, Luke has finished in the top 10 in the world standings 12 times in 14 years, proving he is one of chuckwagon racing's toughest competitors. Luke's 2016 season combined consistency





## WPCA 2016 Awards: Competitors

with brilliance as he finished in the top 5 at six of the nine Tour shows, with top-12 showings at the other three. He recorded 29 top-10 runs, along with two day money runs and 13 runs that cracked the top 5.

The 2016 season saw Luke post solid 12th- and 11th-place finishes at the opening stops in Grande Prairie and Saskatoon. He climbed to fifth in the world standings after the Medicine Hat Stampede and gained another spot after a solid fourth-place finish in High River. Luke then qualified for the semi-final round at the Ponoka Stampede to finish off the first half of the season in second place, just one and a half points behind defending champion Kurt Bensmiller, with Colt Cosgrave and Vern Nolin only five points back.

After a successful Calgary Stampede that saw him once again qualify for the semi-final round, Luke continued his hot hand by winning the Bonnyville Chuckwagon Championship for the second year in a row. This win propelled Luke to the top of the world standings, just ahead of Vern Nolin and Luke's own son-in-law **Logan Gorst**. A new challenger in Gary Gorst (Luke's daughter **Shalyn Gorst's** father-in-law) emerged after a win at the Strathmore Heritage Days as the wagons headed north for the second-last show of the year in Dawson Creek. It was here that Luke fought off all challengers and defended his title at the Battle of the North to increase his lead in the world standings. A third-place showing at the Battle of the Rockies in Rocky Mountain House proved to be enough, as Luke held off Gary to claim his first WPCA world title.

Among his rewards, Luke received a bronze (top right corner, with his outriders **Quaid Tournier** and Chance Flad), a buckle and the keys to the GMC world champion



truck (presented by **Greg Vogel** and Christa Paterson, as Luke is joined by wife **Michele Tournier** and the WPCA's Tom Barrow, above).