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TURNING THE BARRELS

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Photos in this issue by Shellie Scott (2016 Equine Outfit of Excellence) and Billy Melville (2005 Equine Outfit of Excellence).

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One for the Archives



Wendy and Cliff Cunningham on holiday in Italy. This is when Cliff got the call from the Calgary Stampede inviting him to be the Chuckwagon 101 demonstration driver next year.

Photo courtesy of Wendy and Cliff Cunningham



WPCA 2016 Equine Outfit of Excellence

THE IMPORT TOOL Corporation Equine Outfit of Excellence award was developed by outrider **Eddie Melville**. It was designed to recognize the outstanding achievements of the true athletes of chuckwagon racing: the thoroughbred horses.

Import Tool has remained the sponsor for this award since its inception in 2005. The company sees a strong connection between its own corporate values and traditions, having been in business for 55 years, and the western traditions inherent in the WPCA. Over the years, they have become synonymous with this prestigious award.

The 2016 Equine Outfit of Excellence Right Leader is **Colt Cosgrave's Coeur Joie**, also known as **Cujo**. This 15-year-old was originally bought out of Vancouver by Colt's cousin **Jason Glass**, who used him as both a Right and Left Leader. A horse trade brought the chestnut gelding to the Cosgrave barn in 2013, where he has excelled ever since.

An honest horse, **Cujo** soon proved his versatility. He was used on both the short and long barrels, and helped lead Colt to a final heat victory at the Ponoka Stampede. He was also the highest pointed horse on the 2016 WPCA Tour. The original **Cujo** was a dog in a **Stephen King** novel, and this horse proved to be not only the top dog in the Cosgrave barn but also the king of this year's Right Leaders.

Joining **Cujo** up front is Left Leader **Gage Park**, also known as **Gage**. He's owned by **Doug Irvine**. This 10-year-old Illinois-bred bay gelding was bought in the fall of 2012 out of Mountaineer Park in West Virginia after a four-year racetrack career that saw him post five wins.

Though **Gage** was initially a tough horse to break, patience, persistence and a change of scenery proved to be what he needed as he began his chuckwagon career as a Left



Top: The 2016 Right Leader Coeur Joie, also known as Cujo, owned by Colt Cosgrave.

Bottom: The 2016 Left Leader Gage Park, also known as Gage, owned by Doug Irvine.

Wheeler in 2013. Circumstance proved to be opportunity, as **Gage** was soon ushered to the lead where he became the top Left Leader in the Irvine barn.



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Backing up Cujo and Gage as a Right Wheeler is **Gary Gorst's Tommy and Buster**, also known as **Tommy**. Tommy is the biggest horse in the barns, coming in at over 18 hands. This nine-year-old Kentucky-bred bay gelding was bought in the fall of 2014 from Turf Paradise racetrack in Phoenix after a racing career that included five wins.

Tommy's future looked bleak after a tendon injury ended his racetrack career in 2013. However, WPCA Equine Specialist **Lisa Cawte Baker** would not give up on Tommy, and after a series of laser treatments he was given a clean bill of health for the 2015 season. Since he is such a big horse, Tommy took a little while to come around in his first year on the Tour, but patience and persistence paid off. He kept improving and became a key member of Gary's 1 and 2 barrel outfits.

Tommy's Left Wheeler partner is **El Aguila Real**, owned by **John Walters**. Nicknamed **Dorchy**, this eight-year-old BC-bred grey gelding was bought by fellow driver **Troy Dorchester** out of Hastings Park in 2011 after a modest career on the racetrack.

An aggressive horse and a handful in the barn, Dorchy was put on as both a Left and Right Wheeler by Troy before he was sold to John in 2014. Dorchy started his career in the Walters barn as a Right Wheeler on John's all-grey 3 and 4 barrel team in 2015 before being switched over to a Left Wheeler in 2016. The switch proved to be a good one, as Dorchy and his regular partner **Jackman** helped propel John to a personal best fifth overall in the 2016 world standings.

A veteran and a rookie make up this year's outriding pen of excellence. The veteran is **Luke Tournier's Brockport**, also known as **Brock**. Durability and class define this 13-year-old Ontario-bred gelding. He made a remarkable 59 starts on the racetrack while winning over \$200,000 before he joined the Tournier camp in the fall of 2010.



Top: The 2016 Right Wheeler Tommy and Buster, also known as Tommy, owned by Gary Gorst.

Bottom: The 2016 Left Wheeler El Aguila Real, also known as Dorchy, owned by John Walters.

Brock began his chuckwagon career in 2011 as a wheel horse before jumping to the outriding pen in 2013. It was here that Brock found his true calling, as he quickly



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became the go-to outriding horse in the Tournier barn. He is a favourite among the outriders. Brock's versatility and durability were on display this summer; he was often used on both leaders and stove as he helped Luke to two show victories on the way to his first world championship.

Joining Brock as champion outriding horse is rookie **Itsafineredwine**, nicknamed **Wino**, who is owned by **Codey McCurrach**. This nine-year-old Washington-bred chestnut gelding was purchased at Emerald Downs in Seattle in 2013 after a racetrack career that saw him win seven races.

Like most outriding horses, Wino began his career as a wagon horse in 2015, with mixed results. He was put in the outriding pen in the spring of 2016 and quickly excelled as a lead horse and favourite among the outriders who were lucky enough to ride him. Wino might not have reached the heights he has if not for a special young lady in the McCurrach barn who believed in the little horse. Codey's daughter **Kassie** insisted that Wino be included in the opening day roster. She has a special relationship with Wino, and Codey admits she saw something in the horse that maybe others hadn't.

These horses on the Equine Outfit of Excellence often had only moderate success, if any, on the racetrack. If you look back at their bloodlines, however, you can see they come from some of the greatest race horses ever and are bred to run. For many, it is finding the right combination and allowing them to excel as a member of a team.

Colt Cosgrave's Cujo can trace his ancestors back to two Hall of Fame Triple Crown winners in two-time Horse of the Year **Secretariat** and **Seattle Slew**. Cujo's family tree looks like an all-star team, with names like **Northern Dancer**, **Native Dancer**, **Deputy Minister**, **Damascus**, **Nearctic** and **Discovery**. One of his ancestors, **Display**, started 103 races, winning 23. With multiple Horse of the



The 2016 outriding horses Brockport, also known as Brock, owned by Luke Tournier (top), and Itsafineredwine, also known as Wino, owned by John Walters (bottom).

Year and major race winners in his genetic pool, it is no wonder Cujo can run like he does.



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Doug Irvine's Gage Park has an all-star bloodline going back 60 years. He may have only won \$55,000 with five wins in 40 starts in a very modest career, but his ancestors include Hall of Fame horses; Eclipse Award Horse of the Year winners; Kentucky Derby, Preakness, Belmont Stakes and Queen's Plate winners; and a Triple Crown winner, the rarest of success stories in horse racing.

One of Gage's most famous ancestors was Northern Dancer, arguably the greatest Canadian horse ever. Northern Dancer went into the Hall of Fame in 1976 after winning the Kentucky Derby and Preakness (the first two legs of the Triple Crown), as well as the Queen's Plate in 1964. Northern Dancer went on to become one of the leading sires of all time. Further back on this same distinguished bloodline is Native Dancer, who went into the Hall of Fame in 1963 after being named Eclipse Award Horse of the Year in 1952 and 1954, and having come close to the Triple Crown, winning the Belmont Stakes and Preakness and finishing second in the Kentucky Derby. Two other distinguished ancestors are **Bold Ruler** and Secretariat. Bold Ruler went into the Hall of Fame in 1973 after becoming Eclipse Award Horse of the Year in 1957 and winning the Preakness that year. There can be no bigger name than Secretariat, the 1973 Triple Crown winner. Secretariat went into the Hall of Fame in 1974 after being named Horse of the Year in 1972 and 1973.

Gary Gorst's Tommy and Buster has a similar illustrious background that may not appear obvious, considering he had only won \$55,000 with five wins in 26 starts. Tommy's bloodlines go back 100 years with famous names in racing, including **Unbridled**, the 1990 Kentucky Derby winner, and **Buckpasser**, a Hall of Fame horse in 1970. Buckpasser was also the 1966 Eclipse Award Horse of the Year.

Two of the most famous horses of all time are part of Tommy's background. **Man o' War** went into the Hall of Fame in 1957 after being named the 1920 Eclipse Award Horse of the Year and winning the Preakness and Belmont

Stakes. Probably the only reason why Man o' War didn't win the Triple Crown is that he didn't run in the Kentucky Derby; his owner didn't like racing there and thought it was too early in the year. The other famous ancestor is **War Admiral**, a son of Man O'War. War Admiral went into the Hall of Fame in 1958 after winning the 1937 Triple Crown and being named the 1937 Horse of the Year. Despite a modest record on the track, it is easy to see why Tommy can run and loves it, with such an amazing family tree.

El Aguila Real, owned by John Walters and also known as Dorchy, also has an impressive genetic pool. **Sword Dancer** entered the Hall of Fame in 1977 after being named the 1959 Eclipse Award Horse of the Year and finishing second in the 1959 Kentucky Derby. Damascus entered the Hall of Fame in 1974 after being named the 1967 Eclipse Award Horse of the Year and winning the Preakness that year.

Luke Tournier's Brockport, had a more successful career on the track, money-wise. In 59 starts, mostly at Woodbine in Toronto, Brock won just over \$201,000. He is another horse with a winning pedigree, with 1973 Hall of Fame horse and 1957 Preakness winner Bold Ruler in his family tree. Another famous ancestor, **Foolish Pleasure**, won the 1975 Kentucky Derby and finished second in both the Preakness and Belmont Stakes, earning a spot in the Hall of Fame in 1995.

Codey McCurrach's Wino (Itsafineredwine) is another horse with a modest track record, winning only seven times in a 46-race career for \$52,000 at Seattle's Emerald Downs. This horse, however, comes from a solid bloodline that includes the 1935 Horse of the Year and 1969 Hall of Fame credentials in Discovery. Bold Ruler is also part of the bloodline. **Pleasant Colony** won the Preakness and Kentucky Derby in 1981, and finished third in the Belmont Stakes. **Gallant Man** won the Belmont in 1957 and finished second in the Kentucky Derby; results like that earned him Hall of Fame selection in 1987.



The Original Six: 2005 Outfit of Excellence

AS WE CELEBRATE the 2016 Equine Outfit of Excellence winners, we also want to look back and salute the original six horses from 2005.

Right Leader

Luke Tournier's Smooth Device, also known as **Smoothy**, was partner to the great **Port**. He was instrumental on Luke's 2005 Calgary Stampede champion team, which was recognized as one of the best outfits of all time. His 24 top-5 runs as well as six first-place day money runs, on the Tour propelled Luke to championship final heats at the Ponoka Stampede and Klondike Chuckwagon Derby, and to his first WPCA Tour show win at the Red Deer Chuckwagon Championship.

Left Leader

Hugh Sinclair's Whispering Mirage, also known as **Mirage**, had already led Hughie to two Calgary Stampede titles by 2005. If there was a Hall of Fame for WPCA horses, it is quite likely that Mirage would be in it. In 2005, Mirage, along with his grey partner **Captain**, led Hughie to 13 top-5 runs, including five day money runs and the show championship at the Strathmore Heritage Days Stampede.

Right Wheeler

Reg Johnstone's Midnight Bob, known simply as **Bob**, was the key horse leading Reg to his 2005 world championship. Bob helped power Reg to 16 top-5 runs in 2005, including eight first-place day money runs, as well as show wins at the Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede, the Rocky Mountain Turf Club Derby and the Ponoka Stampede.

Left Wheeler

Neil Walgenbach's Hot Shot Robbie led Neil to win the Grande Prairie Stompede and make the finals at the Battle of the North and the Calgary



Top: The 2005 Right Leader Smooth Device, also known as Smoothy, owned by Luke Tournier.

Bottom: The 2005 Left Leader Whispering Mirage, also known as Mirage, owned by Hugh Sinclair.



The Original Six: 2005 Outfit of Excellence

Stampede. Throughout the 2005 season, **Robbie** was part of 14 top-5 runs on the Tour, including five first-place day money runs.

Outriding Horses

Rae Croteau, Jr.'s Demons Apostle, also known as **Abby**, helped power Rae to three sudden-death championship final heat appearances in 2005 at the Ponoka Stampede, the WPCA Tour championship, and the Battle of the North, to victory at the Badlands Dinosaur Derby and to a career-best fourth place in the world standings.

Tyler Helmig's Old Ice, known as **Ice**, chased Tyler to seven top-5 runs in 2005, including three first-place day money runs, as well as the championship final heats at the Battle of the North and the Klondike Chuckwagon Derby.

Top right: The 2005 Right Wheeler Midnight Bob, also known as Bob, owned by Reg Johnstone.

Middle right: The 2005 Left Wheeler Hot Shot Robbie, also known as Robbie, owned by Neil Walgenbach.

Bottom right, and below: The 2005 outriding horses Demons Apostle, also known as Abby, owned by Rae Croteau, Jr., and Old Ice, also known as Ice, owned by Tyler Helmig.

