



TURNING THE BARRELS

The Official Newsletter of the World Professional Chuckwagon Association

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 69
APRIL 2018

BLACKJACK LIVESTOCK CO.

PAGE 2

The amazing and sometimes true story behind this friendly group of wagon sponsors.

GRANDE PRAIRIE STOMPEDE TARP AUCTION

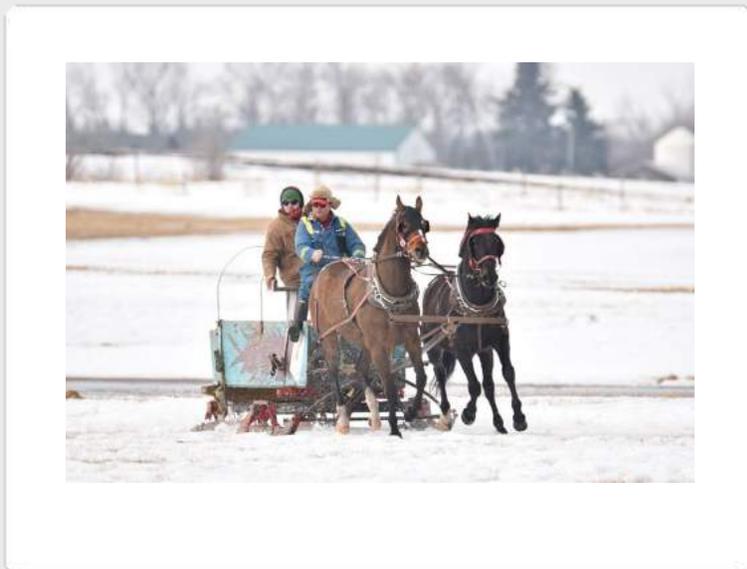
PAGE 6

Results were up from 2017 by more than \$78,000.

GROWING SUPPORT FOR THE SPORT

PAGE 9

How the Grande Prairie Chuckwagon Heritage Foundation significantly increased support for wagon racing.



ONE FOR THE ARCHIVES

Rick Fraser's idea of spring training in mid-April.
Come on, winter, help us out here.

**ONE MONTH UNTIL THE START OF THE
2018 WPCA PRO TOUR!**



Official Truck of the WPCA



BlackJack Livestock Co.



The BlackJack Livestock Co. crew at the Strathmore Heritage Days Stampede in 2016.

THE 2018 WPCA Tour will mark the 10th year that the BlackJack Livestock Co. has sponsored a wagon. The model this group uses is one that any company, group of companies or even groups of friends can use to get involved with the sport of wagon racing and have a great time.

The group proudly (but perhaps a bit facetiously) displays in its hosting tent a statement that supposedly tells the story of the BlackJack Livestock Co. The statement reads

Our origin dates back 150 years to the great Texas cattle drives. Members were former cattle drivers on the conventional cattle drives who were dismissed by their trail bosses for unruly behaviour.

When questioned about this so-called history, the key players in the BlackJack Livestock Co. admit they may have been stretching the truth about their historical roots just a bit. In reality, they're basically just a group of wagon fans who

didn't think they'd get any respect if they called themselves the slightly more accurate Four Guys From Calgary Who Like Wagon Racing.



The BlackJack Livestock Co.'s Scott Smith, Ken Fraser and Rick Pauloski posing with Luke Tournier, their first sponsored driver, in 2009.

Some of the founders of the BlackJack Livestock Co. are **Rick Pauloski**, **Scott Smith** and **Rob Rathwell**. Two other key members were **Bing Rundquist** and **Olaf (the Belgian Cowboy)**.

The true (we think) story is that the guys were sitting around the table talking about their passion for chuckwagon racing. They decided it was time to move beyond being fans of

the sport to become true supporters as tarp sponsors. They set a budget and arranged to check out a WPCA tarp auction with the intention of trying to buy a tarp for one of the last 10 drivers for one of the shows near Calgary.

BlackJack Livestock Co.



BlackJack Livestock Co. in 2011.

Left: Running with Cliff Cunningham.

Right: Setting up camp in Rocky Mountain House.



Scott Smith tells a story about how at their first tarp auction, fairly early on in the evening, he left their table for a trip to the washroom, knowing it would be a while before they got to the drivers they were going to bid on. Imagine his surprise when he came back and discovered they had bought the tarp for **Luke Tournier** for \$3,500 for the Strathmore show.

They still had money in the budget and Rick Pauloski was determined they should get one of the other drivers as well. They ended up buying **Cliff Cunningham** for the High River show. Rick was a little stressed out at that point because now they had to find more sponsors to cover the costs.

That first show in High River in 2009 was an eye-opener for them. They had new embroidered shirts and, in their words, “We were in the chuckwagon business.” They didn’t have a sponsor tent and their entertaining budget afforded them only a cooler of beer and a few bags of chips and pretzels.

At that point, they knew they had to get better organized. Six weeks later, they set up in Strathmore with Luke Tournier. By then, they had managed to put together two hosting tents and a barbecue. Unfortunately, that was the year of the big wind- and rainstorm in

Strathmore. The storm turned their new tents into scrap and they had to start over. That first year was a great experience overall, however, and they’re still here, nine years later, continuing to have fun.

Over the years, their quality hospitality has earned the BlackJack Livestock Co. folks a great reputation. Guests to their tents have included drivers, outriders, chuckwagon family members, WPCA officials, local politicians and even royalty like Miss Rodeo Canada and the Strathmore Stampede Queen.

By their third year, they upgraded the trailer and got a number of new volunteers involved. That allowed them to truly expand the operation for the first time. For the 2011 season, they bought Cliff Cunningham’s wagon for Strathmore and Rocky Mountain House. They also purchased **Chance Bensmiller**’s wagon for High River and **Logan Gorst**’s tarp for the WPCA Qualification Run-off held in Strathmore. Their objective was still to just have fun, as both fans and sponsors.



Rustling up some cheeseburgers on the BlackJack Livestock Co. grill.

The guys all still have day jobs. They tell their drivers, “We will give you the shirts off our backs” and they literally do that: They

BlackJack Livestock Co.



A wagon sponsored by BlackJack Livestock Co. (centre) during the infield start in Strathmore.

supply all their sponsored drivers with shirts featuring the BlackJack Livestock Co. logo.

The support they offer the wagon community has been returned back to them, much to their surprise. Back in 2011, Cliff and **Wendy Cunningham** used to bring food to them. The guys had thought it was their job to feed the driver but the Cunninghams explained that they liked to look after their sponsors too.

Does this crew make an impact? It would seem so. They sponsored Cliff in 2009 and 2011, and Wendy says, “Years later, we still talk to them when they come by to say hello at various shows. They are very friendly and generous, and everyone that partners with them really likes them.”

In 2012, they partnered up with **Evan Salmond**. At the time, they thought his wife **Adrienne** was having to work too hard in the barn so as part of their partnership, the guys hired a couple of girls from 4-H to help out with the chores. When you partner with BlackJack Livestock Co., that partnership becomes like a family.

Their 2013 volunteer base and budget only allowed them to support a single driver at one show; they partnered with **Ross Knight** for Strathmore.

In 2014 and 2015, they resumed their relationship with Evan Salmond as he carried their tarp in Strathmore and High River. They also added support for Evan in Rocky Mountain House, their first time at that Tour stop, in 2015.

Since 2016, they have partnered with **Dustin Gorst**, expanding their involvement from their usual High River and Strathmore shows to include Medicine Hat and Rocky Mountain House. That means more travel, more volunteers, a bigger budget, longer hours and a lot more fun. It also resulted in their first show win as a sponsor: Dustin’s wagon, which they sponsored, won the 2017 show in Rocky Mountain House.

“It is great to be around them at the various shows,” says **Jaycee Gorst**. “The atmosphere they bring is fantastic. Rain or shine, win or lose, they make it fun for everyone. We are so fortunate to have them as a sponsor.”

BlackJack Livestock Co.



The BlackJack Livestock Co. running as a secondary sponsor at the Calgary Stampede.



Cliff and Wendy Cunningham spending some time with members of the BlackJack Livestock Co.



The BlackJack Livestock Co. truck taking part in the 2016 Strathmore Heritage Days parade.



The first show win for a wagon sponsored by BlackJack Livestock Co. was in Rocky Mountain House in 2017.

The BlackJack Livestock Co. crew clearly gets what the WPCA is about: celebrating this western heritage sport. Let them be an enticement and a role model to other people who have entertained the thought “Wouldn’t it be neat to be a wagon sponsor?”

Why not round up some friends (as many as it takes to purchase a tarp and wagon), live out that dream and have the

type of experiences that these guys have been having for the last decade? They have established a well-deserved reputation with their clients, the WPCA, various drivers and the families and friends of those drivers.

Stop by and meet the BlackJack Livestock Co. crew at any of the four Tour stops they will be at in 2018 to hear their story and find out how you can make it your story as well.

Grande Prairie Stompede Tarp Auction

IT WAS A full house on April 6 at Maddhatters Lounge in Grande Prairie as companies came out to bid on the 36 WPCA drivers who will be racing at the Grande Prairie Stompede from May 30 to June 3.

When the lights went down, it was Air Canada flying **Mark Sutherland** to the top of the auction with a bid of \$11,000.

Three-time Calgary Stampede champion and 2017 world champion **Kurt Bensmiller** cracked the \$10,000 bid mark as he teamed up with Trans Peace Construction. Joining the \$10,000 bid mark were **Jason Glass** (Birchcliff Energy), **Troy Dorchester** (PureChem Services), **Gary Gorst** (Northstar Hydrovac) and **Cody Ridsdale** (Envolve Energy Services).

Rookie driver **Josh Hrynyk** attended his first WPCA tarp auction. It was the Grande Prairie Chuckwagon Heritage Foundation winning the bid on Josh's tarp at \$6,000.

Cliff Cunningham will start his final season of professional racing with a nice bid of \$8,000 from Beaut Oilfields Services.

Obrey Motowylo is the 2017 Grande Prairie Stompede



Counterclockwise from top left:
 1. Mark Sutherland with Air Canada representative Cathy Redekopp.
 2. Jim Knight with Richie Bros. auctioneer Olin Rossvold.
 3. Chansé Vigen, Grande Prairie Wagon Committee chair Phil Troyer and Ross Knight.
 4. Cliff Cunningham with Aaron Gallagher of Beaut Oilfield Services.
 5. Troy Flad with Mike Cole of Maximum Tank Truck Services.
 6. Mitch Sutherland with Frank Havies of Happy Trails RV.



Grande Prairie Stompede Tarp Auction

champion and will defend his title carrying the tarp of his longtime sponsor H & E Oilfield Services.

The Grande Prairie Stompede, headed by its president **Trevor Denis**, did an outstanding job at the tarp auction.

The WPCA is also grateful for the behind-the-scenes work of **Phil Troyer**, the chair of Grande Prairie's wagon committee. The committee contacted almost 100 potential sponsors by email and Phil personally called over 80 potential sponsors.

As a result of Phil spending an average of 10 to 12 hours a week calling sponsors and organizing the sale, there were over 20 registered bidders with roughly a dozen more bidders committed to coming to the tarp sale.

This hard work paid off and was evident in the number of new sponsors that will appear on the tarps and the number of higher bids. Last year's top bid in Grande Prairie was for \$7,750; this was exceeded this year by 11 drivers, with six drivers receiving over \$10,000.

Thank you to all who helped to make this auction a success.



Counterclockwise from top left:

1. Dustin Gorst with Brian Grant from Grande Prairie Airport.
2. Gary Gorst with sponsors from Northstar Hydrovac.
3. Father and son Mike and Chansé Vigen discuss the auction.
4. Troy Dorchester and Sue Fraser.
5. Jordie Fike with Robert Fleck from H & M Meats.
6. Dayton Sutherland, who received tarp support for Grande Prairie from Nordic Energy.



Grande Prairie Stompede Tarp Auction

Driver	Sponsor	Amount Bid
Mark Sutherland	Air Canada	\$11,000
Kurt Bensmiller	Trans Peace Construction	\$10,000
Gary Gorst	Northstar Hydrovac	\$10,000
Jason Glass	Birchcliff Energy	\$10,000
Cody Ridsdale	Envolve Energy Services	\$10,000
Troy Dorchester	PureChem Services	\$10,000
Codey McCurrach	Distribution Now	\$9,500
Chanse Vigen	Driving Force	\$9,500
Mitch Sutherland	Happy Trails RV	\$9,000
Obrey Motowylo	H & E Oilfields Services	\$8,000
Cliff Cunningham	Beaut Oilfield Services	\$8,000
Roger Moore	AFD Petroleum	\$7,000
Mike Vigen	Sundown Oilfield Services	\$7,000
Dustin Gorst	Grande Prairie Airport	\$6,750
John Walters	BJ Enterprises	\$6,500
Luke Tournier	Barrack Energy Services	\$6,500
Doug Irvine	B & R Eckel's Transport	\$6,500
Kirk Sutherland	Daler Pressure Services	\$6,500
Evan Salmond	DeBolt Contracting	\$6,000
Dayton Sutherland	Nordic Energy	\$6,000
Josh Hrynyk	Grande Prairie Chuckwagon Heritage Foundation	\$6,000
Vern Nolin	Colbourne Capital	\$5,500
Jordie Fike	H & M Meats	\$5,500
Troy Flad	Maximum Tank Truck Services	\$5,500
Layne MacGillivray	Cascade Energy	\$5,000
Rick Fraser	Friends of Team 23	\$5,000
Logan Gorst	Global Bus Lines	\$5,000
Chad Harden	Spartan Controls	\$5,000
Chad Fike	BRAND	\$5,000
Blaid Flad	Compass Access Solutions	\$5,000
Darcy Flad	Ken Sargent GMC	\$4,750
Bob Van Eaton	I Recover	\$4,500
Kelly Morin	Grande Prairie Stompede	\$4,100
Curtis Morin	The Gangsters	\$4,000
Jim Knight	CIMS Corporation	\$3,600
Ross Knight	Dynamic Energy/Community Tarp	\$3,500

2018 Grande Prairie total \$240,700

Growing Support for the Sport



The Grande Prairie Chuckwagon Heritage Foundation recently celebrated 10 years of supporting the sport of chuckwagon racing.

SINCE 2008, THE Grande Prairie Chuckwagon Heritage Foundation (GPCHF) has been one of the most supportive groups in chuckwagon racing. As anyone associated with the sport knows, the operating expenses of a racing team and the care of up to 25 or 30 thoroughbred horses is extensive.

Fundraising by the GPCHF has resulted in over a million dollars being invested back into prize money for drivers at the Grande Prairie Stompede event. Here is the story of how that Foundation came together to increase support for wagon racing in the community.

It was while attending the 2008 Grande Prairie Stompede that local businessperson **Justin Tidd** came to realize that the prize for the Sunday Dash for Cash was only \$10,000. He was the owner of Savage Oilfield Rentals Ltd. and had attended the Stompede before, not only as a spectator but as a tarp sponsor for WPCA driver **Lincoln Douglas**.

Justin knew that in previous years the Dash for Cash prize had been as high as \$50,000. Through his understanding of the cost of running a business and imagining the expenses involved for these drivers to travel to the various venues, he wondered if there was something he could do to make the Dash for Cash more lucrative for the drivers.

After talking to a few venue officials, he made several phone calls to see if there was enough interest to add funds to the event. Within an afternoon, he was able to get enough people to commit an additional \$20,000.

By the fall of 2008, Justin and a handful of likeminded fans, businesspeople and a couple of WPCA drivers met to form the Grande Prairie Chuckwagon Heritage Foundation. Justin became the Foundation's first president.

The 2009 Grande Prairie Stompede Sunday Dash for Cash, the first supported by the newly formed GPCHF, offered \$50,000. These Dash funds went to WPCA drivers only. The funds put up by the Grande Prairie Chuckwagon Heritage Foundation would go toward helping drivers cover the cost of their travel and animal care.

The list of new Dash for Cash sponsors included many of those who formed the club; the rest looked like the accounts payable list of many of the GPCHF members. People with whom they did business were willing to support a worthwhile project that would work toward sustaining the sport of chuckwagon racing in the Grande Prairie area and at large.

Growing Support for the Sport

The 2010 Stompede saw the Dash money grow to \$70,000. As well, the GPCHF made the decision to include Western Chuckwagon Association drivers in its Dash. Happy Trails RV came on board as the headline sponsor for the WPCA and PeterLane Concrete was the headline sponsor for the WCA.

By 2013, the Sunday Dash for Cash at the Grande Prairie Stompede had grown to an impressive \$125,000. Since then, the Foundation has maintained the Dash at that level. As well, dashes at other events, including the Teepee Creek Stampede, Rio Grande Rodeo and the Cranberry Lake Rodeo in Debolt, have become part of the GPCHF's commitment to the sport. The GPCHF has also supported many non-profit projects in the Grande Prairie area.

The success of the Grande Prairie Chuckwagon Heritage Foundation continues. This is due to the dedicated sponsors the Foundation has been able to bring on board and the group of volunteers it has. It has managed to bring new sponsors to the sport. Its volunteers have worked together to make sure that these sponsors enjoy themselves not only at the rodeo venues but at the events they put on as well. The GPCHF now puts money into all three levels of wagon racing in the area: the WPCA, the WCA and the All Pro Chuckwagon & Chariot Association.

The 2018 Grande Prairie Stompede will mark the 10th year that the GPCHF and its sponsors have worked together to preserve the western heritage sport of chuckwagon racing. Expectations for the 2018 season are high. This year, the GPCHF's fundraising event in March successfully raised \$46,000. This once again demonstrates the community is truly supportive of this sport. The WPCA is grateful for all the work done by everyone connected to the Grande Prairie Chuckwagon Heritage Foundation.



Driver Josh Hrynyk (second from right) with Grande Prairie Chuckwagon Heritage Foundation members Jerry Shaver, Justin Tidd and Garth Lawrance. The Foundation will sponsor Josh as its driver at the 2018 Tour stop in Grande Prairie.

Photos in this issue supplied by Ed Wittchen, Scott Smith, Bryan Hebson, Sue Fraser and many of the WPCA drivers.

WPCA / (403) 236-2466 / 3779 Grey Eagle Drive (Hotel), Calgary, AB T3E 3X8 / halfmileofhell.com

SPONSOR SUPPORT

The WPCA is pleased to once again be partnered with Sportsnet 960 The Fan to bring fans the WPCA Insider Report. The WPCA Insider Report is a 15-minute interview with Robb Kerr from 960 The Fan and a WPCA driver. Starting May 22, the WPCA Insider Report will air Tuesdays at 3pm on 960 AM out of Calgary. Fans can also listen to the reports through the 960 The Fan website.

