



Champion Loads Up At Canadian Cowboy Christmas

Friends. Partners. Teammates.

Call it what you want—Richmond Champion and Virgil fit all three categories.

The Dublin, Texas bareback rider and the much-decorated C5 bucking horse met again in Ponoka in the Showdown round of the Ponoka Stampede. And the result was the same as it had been almost one year previous when the two got together at the Calgary Stampede. The combination topped the competition and Champion slipped a large cheque into his wallet.

This time it was \$12,948 that the reigning Alberta Circuit champion pocketed, with the biggest chunk (\$8250) coming courtesy of his 91.25 ride aboard the famous grey in the Showdown.

“They were all great horses in the final four but he was the one to have,” Champion said of the 2017 Canadian and World Champion buckler. “I knew that if I wanted to beat Jake, I better draw the grey. I drew third and he was still in there. When I picked him, I knew I had a chance.”

It was a welcome moment for Champion, the former million dollar American winner, as he sat in an unaccustomed position—17th in the world standings and outside of the group of fifteen qualifiers for the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo. The weekend’s success at Ponoka, combined with the win at Williams Lake Stampede (87.5 points on Duffy Rodeo’s Tweety Bird for \$3768) and a third place \$1241 cheque at Airdrie Pro Rodeo resulted in an \$18,000 boost in season earnings for the CFR qualifier of a year ago. And both of his wins came at Finning Pro Tour Rodeos, which puts him in line for a berth at the Finning Pro Tour Finals in Armstrong, BC in September.

“I came to Ponoka for the first time last year and I’m addicted to this place. I love a format like this where it goes right down to the wire.” Champion admitted, moments after his winning ride on Virgil. “It doesn’t get any better than this.”

And while it was Vold, last year’s Ponoka bareback riding titleist that Champion edged out for the win, no one needs to feel too sorry for the three time Canadian champion. Vold, who only recently returned to competition after the injury he incurred at last year’s WNFR, put a tidy \$14,000 into his bank account for his Ponoka effort.

The two, who are traveling partners—Richmond stayed at Jake’s place over the last week—will continue their friendly rivalry once again at Calgary and very likely later in the year at Red Deer’s first CFR and maybe even at Las Vegas in December.

The strong showing over the Canadian "Cowboy Christmas" events should make the likable Texan one of the favourites for a Canadian title and perhaps even the elusive world title. And that’s exactly the way he wants it.

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"I absolutely want to win at least one of each," he grinned as he got ready to head south of the 49th parallel for the 4th of July potential bonanza.

Aldergrove, BC's Carman Pozzobon is following up her Canadian title year of 2017 with a huge season on her outstanding mare, Ripp. The duo collected wins at both Airdrie and Williams Lake and picked up a third place go-round cheque at Ponoka for a profitable \$11,000 start to her Cowboy Christmas run. Pozzobon came into the Canada-Day-Long sitting first in Canada and 13th in the world standings and will solidify her hold on top spot in Canada while inching up the WPRA leaderboard and ever closer to a coveted first-ever berth at the National Finals Rodeo.

And there's a new "fear the beard" figure in the team roping. With 2016 World Champion, Jeremy Buhler, shaving off his somewhat famous facial hair, Tristin Woolsey, the heeler on the other side of the box from header Denver Johnson, has the beard and the talent to take up the mantle from Buhler who teamed with Levi Simpson to win the world in 2016 and the Canadian title in 2017.

Woolsey and Johnson already had a commanding lead in the Canadian standings going into the weekend and added Ponoka to their growing list of 2018 accomplishments winning both the aggregate (18.9 seconds on three runs) and the Showdown (5.3 seconds) for a \$7734 addition to their season's earnings to date.

For complete unofficial results from the Ponoka Stampede, Williams Lake Stampede and Airdrie Pro Rodeo, go the rodeocanada.com.

Next up on the CPRA schedule are Coronation Pro Rodeo, July 6-7 and Benalto Fair and Stampede, July 6-8.

About the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association

The Canadian Professional Rodeo Association (CPRA) with headquarters in Airdrie, Alberta is the sanctioning body for professional rodeo in Canada. The CPRA approves over 50 events annually with a total payout exceeding \$5.1 million. The organization holds the Grass Roots Final September 27-28 at Stampede Park in Calgary, Alberta and their premiere event - the Canadian Finals Rodeo (CFR) - at the ENMAX Centrium, Westerner Park in Red Deer, Alberta, October 30 - November 4. Follow the CPRA on Twitter and Instagram @prorodeocanada, 'Like' Canadian Professional Rodeo Association on Facebook or online at RodeoCanada.com.

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