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NEWS RELEASE

Outstanding night for Oregonians to kick off Heavy Horse Pull

CALGARY – Canadian title hopes on this night? Let’s just say they were going . . . going . . . (Ore)gon.

Opening night of the Calgary Stampede’s 2011 Heavy Horse Pull, sponsored by Soderglen Ranches, UPS, Burnco, and Wrangler, shaped up as a classic Can-Am clash, with three teams from Oregon and three more from Saskatchewan in the lineup. But the experience of seasoned Pacific Northwest teamsters like Bob McGowan and Randy Dodge carried the day, as outfits from the Beaver State claimed the top three positions during Friday’s lightweight division final.

Dodge, of Albany, Ore., and his Glover International Trucks-supported Belgian duo of Red and Rocky pulled an 8,500-pound sled the full 14 feet under the Big Top, securing a winner’s cheque of \$3,000 and earning Dodge his first Stampede title since 2007.

“I expected that. Red and Rocky are a pretty good team together,” said Dodge, who declined a shot at matching the Stampede’s existing division weight record of 9,500 pounds. “I’ve had them split up, working with other horses, in the past, and they didn’t do so good. But they just seem to click as a pair.”

McGowan, of Lebanon, Ore., finished second overall, and collected \$2,500, on the reins of his Befus Construction-supported Belgian pair of LeRoy and LuLu, who pulled that 8,500-pound sled 156 inches. McGowan’s Belgian team of Plugg and Nagg, supported by Lone Wolf Wireline, placed third, pulling 8,500 pounds a distance of 145 inches, and won \$1,500.

Kim Hewalo of Pilot Butte, Sask., was teamster for Friday’s top-placing Canadian outfit, ending up fourth with his Ted and Enid Jansen-supported Belgian team. J.R. and Omar managed 12 inches at 8,500 pounds.

The surprises of the night, though, were LeRoy and Lulu, who were competing in their first pull. Bob’s wife Brenda was scheduled to hold the reins in her own horse-pull debut on Friday, but the McGowans decided to let Bob handle those duties while the equine pair earned some seasoning . . . and the Belgian behemoths very nearly ended up winning the deal.

“We brought LeRoy and Lulu just hoping they’d get their first pull under their belt, even though it was a big pull. We hoped they’d behave nice enough that we wouldn’t be ashamed of ‘em,” said Bob. “Brenda’s worked them every day for the last three months. It’s her team. She’s never pulled, either, so the team needs a few pulls with somebody with some experience.

“And by golly if they didn’t just do terrific right there.”

This year’s Stampede Heavy Horse Pull, the richest in North America, has drawn teamsters from as far away as Oregon, Washington, and Saskatchewan, with outfits primarily featuring Belgian and Percheron horsepower. The teams of the Stampede’s lightweight division tip the scales at a combined two-horse weight of 2,400 to 3,000 pounds.

Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Limited

Box 1060, Station M, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2P 2K8 1.800.661.1260 T 403.261.0101 F 403.265.7197 www.calgarystampede.com



McGowan, who's searching for his first Stampede division title since 2009, is celebrating his 40th season in the horse-pull game. He and Brenda travel to pulls across the Western United States, but have hauled to Calgary for the better part of a decade because "it's the greatest horse pull in the whole world."

Wayne Nagy of Melville, Sask., and his No Point Ranch-supported team of Clyde and Colonel were fifth overall, while Nagy's stepson David Lockhart, also of Melville, was sixth with his Jane Grad-supported outfit of Stoney and Sage. Both teams dropped out with measured pulls at 6,000 pounds.

The Stampede's Heavy Horse Pull will resume Saturday, July 16 at 7 p.m. under the Big Top with the final of the middleweight division, whose teams weigh a combined 3,001 to 3,500 pounds. The heavyweight final, with teams tipping the scales at 3,501 pounds and more, closes out the three-night show on Sunday, July 17 at 7 p.m. under the Big Top.

The Stampede will be webcasting all events held under the Big Top this year. Visit <http://ag.calgarystampede.com/big-top-ustream-2011> for live streaming of Big Top action.

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For more information, please contact:

Annemarie Pedersen
Ag Media Committee Chair

Todd Kimberley
Agriculture Media Writer

Erin Bartlett
Agriculture Program Coordinator

C 403.816.1583

C 403.815.2752

T 403.261.0336

T 403.232.9087

F 403.262.3067

C 403.461.2063

E agmedia@calgarystampede.com

E tkimberley@calgarystampede.com

F 403.262.3067

E ebartlett@calgarystampede.com

The Calgary Stampede is a volunteer-supported, not-for-profit community organization that preserves and promotes western heritage and values. The Stampede contributes to the quality of life in Calgary and southern Alberta through its world-renowned 10-day Stampede, year-round facilities, western events and several youth and agriculture programs. All revenue is reinvested into Calgary Stampede programs and facilities. For more about the Stampede, visit www.calgarystampede.com.



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