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NEWS RELEASE

Sinclair earns another buckle during B.C. trio's big penning payday

CALGARY – For the second straight year, Taylor Sinclair has played interior decorator for the Fast Times Farm riding arena in Langley, B.C.

"Yeah, there'll be two Calgary Stampede (championship) cheques hanging in the arena now – winner last year, winner this year," smiled the young rider on Saturday evening.

During the Stampede's 2011 Team Cattle Penning Competition, presented by Calfrac Well Services, Taylor teamed up with her mom Cathy Sinclair and her grandfather George De Jonge for an emotional win in the 7 Class. And on Saturday in the Scotiabank Saddledome, she saddled up with a couple more Lower Mainland penners – Debbie Molnar and Sandy Price, both of Langley – for a thrilling victory in the 10 Class.

The B.C. trio overcame very long odds to enter that winner's circle. The 10 Class is traditionally the largest division in the Stampede's Team Cattle Penning Competition. And this year, partly owing to the Stampede's 100th birthday and limited-edition, Vic Bennett-handcrafted Centennial Trophy Saddles up for grabs, a mind-blowing 295 teams threw their hats in the ring.

"We didn't think about that stuff. We didn't think about any of it. We had to get a job done," said Price. "We just pen our cows and don't try to go fast; we take what's there and do our best."

The Stampede's Team Cattle Penning Competition, presented by Calfrac Well Services, has drawn a record 764 teams from across the continent for its four divisions, with a total prize purse of \$394,610.

The 295 teams in contention to begin the 10 Class competition engaged in two rounds of preliminaries on Wednesday at the Okotoks Agricultural Society in Okotoks, Alta., with 20 teams emerging for Saturday night's third round and final at the Saddledome.

As the 10 Class showdown set up shop in the Saddledome, the Calgary-based team of Skylar Hansen, Alex Hansen, and Denice Hansen held a clear advantage – with a scorching aggregate time of 47.57 seconds over the first two rounds in Okotoks. However, the Hansens opened the door with a no-time in the third round . . . and Sinclair, Molnar, and Price walked right through it, thanks to the fastest time of the third round (32.66) and a solid 40.28 seconds in the final.

Their overall winning time of 132.87 seconds on 12 head of cattle was worth a breathtaking \$43,365, Stampede champion buckles, and three of those coveted Centennial Trophy Saddles. The trio of 13-year-old Sonya Distefano of Calgary, Jordan Lesh of Stillwater, Okla., and Calgary's Suzie Emms claimed the reserve championship, and a runner-up cheque for \$28,910, for their aggregate time of 140.66 seconds on 12 head of cattle.

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Team Cattle Penning, a race against the clock, gives a team of three riders on horseback 60 seconds to separate three specifically identified cattle from a herd of 30 and direct them into a 16-foot-by-24-foot pen at the opposite end of the arena. Teamwork is paramount, with all three riders working in harmony to cut out the correct cattle and drive them to the pen. Teams of riders enter the Stampede's four classes based on relative skill and experience — in ascending order from 7 Class, to 10 Class, to 14 Class, to the pure travelling professionals of the Open Class.

Suddenly, those regular Wednesday-night practices at Fast Times Farm are going to be that much more enjoyable for Sinclair, Molnar, and Price.

"We believe in each other, and that makes a difference. We are a team. We each have a job to do, we're very flexible, and we all count on each other to get the job done," said Molnar. "I wouldn't be here without people like them, Cathy Sinclair, and (fellow Lower Mainland penner) Steve Sigouin."

Molnar had previously won a 7 Class crown at the Stampede in 2008, and a 10 Class reserve title one year later. This marks Price's first Stampede buckle.

The Saddledome will host Team Cattle Penning action for two more nights – the Open Class on Sunday, July 8, and the 7 Class on Monday, July 9 – with third rounds beginning at 5:30 p.m. and finals immediately following.

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

Following the 2012 Stampede, groundbreaking will begin on the Agrium Western Event Centre, the largest project in Stampede history. For details and artistic renderings of this magnificent 150,000-square-foot agriculture showcase and competition venue, scheduled for completion in 2014, visit <http://corporate.calgarystampede.com/about/park-development/agrium-western-event-centre/>

- 30 -

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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.