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NEWS RELEASE

## Smart Frele Cat carries two Canadians to cutting crowns



Les (Hollywood) Timmons of Kamloops, B.C., won the Open division of the Calgary Stampede's cutting horse competition on Thursday evening under the Big Top, winning \$6,963.  
Photo credit: Calgary Stampede

Calgary -- It was a one-take performance for the man they call Hollywood.

Les Timmons of Kamloops, B.C., played the starring role aboard Smart Frele Cat on Thursday evening under the Big Top. The duo juke and jive, zigged and zagged, and befuddled bovines time and again en route to victory and a \$6,963 pay day at the Calgary Stampede's cutting horse competition.

"Yeah, there was an announcer who nicknamed me Hollywood when we used to have cuttings at the PNE (Pacific National Exhibition) in Vancouver," said Timmons, who's also the president of the Canadian Cutting Horse Association and a professional cutting horse trainer.

"I used to do a bridle-less cutting with a horse named Genuine Beppy, and I'd cross my arms and sit on the saddle while he was working the cow," added Timmons with a chuckle. "And I guess I've been known to come on in the finals . . . I'm not saying I'd coast through the go-rounds, but finals are my thing."

That script played out again Thursday. Timmons, 55, was the first into the arena during the 10-team final in the Open division, which features the highest-caliber cutting. He and Smart Frele Cat, which later carried Rod MacDonald of Stump Lake, B.C., to the Non-Pro title, laid down a 217-point ride which went unmatched by the other nine entries. The closest call was the next contestant out, Denton Moffat of Armstrong, B.C., on Kit and Kaboonsmal, who scored 215. Loren Christianson of Stony Plain, Alta., finished third aboard My Own San Lena with a 214.

"I knew that with a 217, they were really going to have to get some good stuff done to beat that mark," said Timmons, who'd started among a group of 28 entries in the Open division. "There wasn't going to be any room for any bobbles, any mistakes. Smart Frele Cat was on his game, definitely."

The Stampede's cutting horse competition is enjoying increased exposure and prize money this year as a stop on the National Cutting Horse Association's 6666 Ranch World Series of Cutting. The elite series, which is adding \$50,000 in prize money at each of its four tour stops, is also travelling through Houston, Columbus, Ohio and Kansas City, Mo., in 2009 on its way to the newly reformatted world finals at Fort Worth, Tex., in December. Nearly \$78,000 was up for grabs in Open and Non-Pro at Calgary.



Smart Frele Cat, a seven-year-old quarter-horse gelding purchased by Timmons at an NCHA Futurity sale two years ago, proved the star of the show this week, becoming the first horse since the Stampede introduced cutting in 1973 to win both Open and Non-Pro titles.

"He's a wonderful horse," said MacDonald, 47, who earned a winner's cheque of \$5,921 for a winning Non-Pro ride of 220 points. "Real flashy, plenty of eye appeal, gets down low to challenge the cow.

"I doubt," added MacDonald, "we'll see another one like him."

The sport of cutting involves a horse-and-rider team aiming to cut at least three individual cows out of a herd within 150 seconds. Contestants are evaluated by a panel of three judges and assessed a score based on the horse's instinctive reactions, the challenges made by the cows cut, and any errors in judgment made by the horse or rider.

Calgary's Andrea Rudkin, 15, who was 2008 Youth division reserve champ a result of a ride-off, got all the glory Thursday night, her 190-point ride aboard Right on CD sealing a three-round aggregate title and the Bill Collins Youth Excellence Award.

Some American competitors did not make the trip to Calgary because of confirmed cases of vesicular stomatitis (VS) in Texas and New Mexico this spring that temporarily closed the international border. That development also prevented the Stampede's cutting horse competition from having a European flavour for the second straight season.

Daniel Jaeggi of Geneva, Switzerland had competed last year in the Non-Pro division, while daughter Constance, 19, had tried her luck in Non-Pro and Youth. Although Jaeggi was in attendance Thursday, his five cutting horses -- which are trained by none other than NCHA president Chubby Turner -- stayed in the Lone Star State.

"We were planning on bringing four or five. But what can you do? It's just one of those things," said Jaeggi, founder of Mercuria Global Energy Solutions, an international energy trading company and one of the Stampede cutting horse competition's major sponsors.

"It's a nice mix between the public and the cutters. I like the way the event is presented, and the enthusiasm of the people. It's pretty cool," said Jaeggi of the Stampede.

Cutting isn't nearly as popular in Europe as it is in North America, noted Jaeggi, but there are still 15 to 20 European shows a year staged in Switzerland, France, Italy, Germany and the Benelux nations.

"If you think about it, cutting is one of the depositories of Western heritage," he said. "It's the closest that a normal, 21<sup>st</sup>-century person can get to actually living the Western heritage. Most of us can't get on a bull. This is accessible to all people, at all levels, of all ages. And the reception it gets from the public here at Stampede proves it has a wide appeal."

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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](http://www.calgarystampede.com).

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