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NEWS RELEASE

Sponsor bids total \$48,000 at Heavy Horse Pull Team Auction



The Heavy Horse Pull Team Auction raised \$48,000 in sponsorship bids for the event's 27 outfits on Thursday night at the Victoria Pavilion.
Photo credit: Calgary Stampede

Calgary -- Rick Byrne knows why the Stampede's Heavy Horse Pull, presented by DundeeWealth, is such a growing attraction.

It's all that raw horsepower.

Byrne, of Regina, and his two-horse team of black Percherons garnered the top bid Thursday night -- \$3,200, from Land Rover Calgary -- as the Heavy Horse Pull event kicked off with its annual Team Auction at the Victoria Pavilion.

"The horses are being brought out in such great condition," said Byrne, who'll be fielding teams in both the heavyweight and middleweight divisions this weekend. "We're probably

looking at some of the best draft horses in many, many years.

"The guys condition them well," added Byrne, the Stampede's 2007 heavyweight champ. "They're fed exceptionally well. The horses are well-muscled. They look good. And it's a great spectator sport."

Thursday night, all 27 entries for this year's Heavy Horse Pull, presented by DundeeWealth, found suitors as the Team Auction drew a total of \$48,000 in bids. Ron Sebastian's rig from Lumsden, Sask., was tops in the middleweight division, with a bid of \$2,250 from Jans Lowline Cattle. The Cochrane-based outfit of Dennis Weinberger was top earner among the lightweight teams, drawing a top bid of \$2,100 from the Stampede's agriculture department.

Competitors in this year's Heavy Horse Pull, presented by DundeeWealth, hail from as far away as Oregon, Wisconsin and Minnesota, with teams primarily featuring Belgians and Percherons. Outfits compete in three classes, which are based on the total weight of the two-horse team -- lightweights from 2,400 to 3,000 pounds, middleweights from 3,001 to 3,500 pounds, and heavyweights 3,500 pounds and up.

Spectators can expect to see these giants of the equine world pull five times their body weight a distance of 14 feet under the Big Top on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings.

Since it was established in 2002, the Stampede's Heavy Horse Pull Team Auction has become an increasingly popular event for individual and corporate sponsors, with its attractive and affordable branding possibilities. The Heavy Horse Pull allows sponsors a great opportunity at promotion, a unique venue for entertaining clients, and the chance to view some top-notch agricultural entertainment.



For successful bidders, the Heavy Horse Pull sponsorship package includes passes to watch their teams during competition from a private VIP section under the Big Top, signage on the horses themselves during competition, stall signage in the barns, and an exclusive party in the Victoria Pavilion alongside the horses after the main events.

"It's intimate. It's up close. It's real," says Dale Befus, the Stampede's Heavy Horse Pull committee chair. "No fancy stuff. It doesn't matter where your spurs are, and how many points for looks. You pull the most weight, you win.

"We have one auction buyer who comes all the time, Glover International. They loved it so much last year that they are overwhelmed this year by staff and customers wanting to come back to this event. One comment we got last year was: 'I got breathed on by a horse!' "

The Heavy Horse Pull's lightweight final begins on Friday night. The middleweights square off Saturday night, and the heavyweights will be put in harness Sunday night. Start time is 7 p.m. all three nights.

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For more information, please contact:

Tracey Foster
Agriculture Event Coordinator
T 403.261.0127
C 403.462.3739
F 403.262.3067
E tfoster@calgarystampede.com

Todd Kimberley
Agriculture Media Writer
C 403.815.2752
F 403.262.3067
E tkimberley@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.