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NEWS RELEASE

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## Finalists ready to start bidding in auctioneers' championship

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Calgary -- Jay Romine's trade secret? Leather-lunged levity.

Romine, of Mt. Washington, Ky., has spent more than a quarter-century as a professional motormouth, making his living as a commercial cattle auctioneer in the Bluegrass State.

And along with his sense of timing and sense of style, he also adds a little sense of humour.

"I like to make people laugh. I like to have a good time," says Romine, 43, who's taking his fourth crack at the Calgary Stampede's International Livestock Auctioneer Championship.

"When you sit down behind that mic, from where I'm from, some of these people have worked a year to raise these cattle. That's their year's work. I don't take that lightly. I work hard for them, and I want to get every dollar I can out of the cattle for them," adds Romine.

"But as far as relating to the people, I like to cut up a little bit. There's a time and a place for that."

Romine, 43, is one of 10 finalists who'll square off Saturday in the 21<sup>st</sup> annual International Livestock Auctioneer Championship. Romine advanced out of the preliminary round Friday at Olds Auction Mart, selling seven drafts of cattle and earning his third career berth in the Stampede's Top 10.

Also advancing to the final, from the original slate of 26 hopefuls, are Ross Annett of Brooks, Alta., Rob Bergevin of Stavely, Alta., Patrick Cassidy of Olds, Jake Cheechov of Eugene, Ore., Dan Clark of Winner, S.D., Tom Frey of Creston, Iowa, Shawn Gist of Gibbons, Alta., Andrew McDowell of Vandalia, Ill., and Paul Ramirez of Tucson, Ariz.

The tongues start wagging, and the gavels start falling, at 11 a.m. Saturday under the Big Top.

"I was born and raised in auctioneering," says Romine, a Stampede finalist in 2005 and '06 and a two-time finalist at the World Livestock Auctioneering contest in the United States. "I've done it all my life . . . and I guess you could say I've been doing it legally for more than 25 years, because back home, you have to be licenced after you're 18.

"I've been doing it over half my life. And I absolutely love it."

Saturday's 10 finalists will each auction off four brand cattle, as part of the Stampede's Brand Consignment Sale, and one Black Box item. They'll be judged on rhythm, clarity, voice control, appearance, mannerisms, deportment, and livestock knowledge, as well as their ability to spot bids and conduct a sale.



"Once they get up there, it's their ring," says Wayne McKinnon, who chairs the Stampede's International Livestock Auctioneers committee. "There are no ringmen to help them; no one's spotting bids for them. It's their market. They run the show."

Black Box items have been introduced to the International Livestock Auctioneer Championship as a way of drawing the general public into the mix. This year's Black Box items include golf packages, tools and cuts of meat, such as strip loins.

"Anybody can bid on the Black Box. That's why we brought it into the competition," says McKinnon. "And this is also something totally outside the realm of what these auctioneers are used to. It's like throwing a bit of a curve ball at them, to test them a little bit."

Also Friday at Olds Auction Mart, champions were chosen in the Fed Beef Expo, a commercial show for pens of five fat, market-ready cattle. The grand champion pen of steers title went to Kolk Farms Ltd. of Iron Springs, Alta., while the grand champion pen of heifers was owned by Andy Rock and Ed Strunks of Delia, Alta. Other honours were awarded as follows: Brad and Shane Lutz, of Olds, reserve champion pen of steers; Rock and Murray Tolten, Brooks, Alta., runner-up pen of steers; and SLM Spud Farm, Taber, reserve champion pen of heifers.

Fed Beef Expo organizers received 26 entries from across Southern Alberta. Pens were judged by a panel of cattle buyers and packing-house officials for conformation, consistency, uniformity, finish and eye appeal.

The Fed Beef Expo's grand champion and reserve champion pens will be auctioned off Saturday under the Big Top following the International Livestock Auctioneer Championship final, either by a member of the International Livestock Auctioneers committee or last year's champion, Peter Raffan of Armstrong, B.C.

The remainder were sold in Friday morning's Fed Beef Expo Sale at Olds.

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**For more information, please contact:**

Janette Bamford  
Agriculture Event Coordinator

**T** 403.261.9174

**C** 403.862.3624

**F** 403.262.3067

**E** [jbamford@calgarystampede.com](mailto:jbamford@calgarystampede.com)

Todd Kimberley  
Agriculture Media Writer

**C** 403.815.2752

**F** 403.262.3067

**E** [tkimberley@calgarystampede.com](mailto:tkimberley@calgarystampede.com)

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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).