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NEWS RELEASE

## Heavy Horse Pull weight record falls for second straight year



The New West Truck Centres-sponsored outfit of Jim and Ben, two Belgians owned by Airdrie's Stan Grad and teamstered by Nicolas Pouso, broke its own weight record Sunday night during the heavyweight final of the Calgary Stampede's Heavy Horse Pull, presented by DundeeWealth, dragging a 13,100-pound sled 14 feet. Photo credit: Calgary Stampede

Calgary -- They went to the American Midwest for the brawn, but they went all the way to South America for that record-breaking touch.

Last year, the Soderghen Ranches duo of Jim and Ben, two monstrous Belgians, set a new Calgary Stampede arena record at the Heavy Horse Pull, presented by DundeeWealth, by pulling a 13,000-pound sled the full 14 feet for teamster Stan Grad.

But when it was time for an encore Sunday night, Grad was ready to turn over the reins.

"Nicolas has a way with horses. Of course, that's why I hired him," said Grad, nodding over at Nicolas Pouso, the young man all the way from Mercedes, Uruguay, a city of 30,000. "Of course, he had to come here to

learn how to pull, but Nicolas is doing an excellent job. He's very dedicated, and he knows horses. He's got a feel for them."

Sunday night under the Big Top, with 22-year-old Pouso acting as teamster and Randy Dodge of Albany, Ore., setting the hook, Grad's New West Truck Centres outfit broke its own weight record as Jim and Ben -- who weigh in at a combined 5,026 pounds -- dragged a 13,100-pound sled 14 feet during the heavyweight final of the Stampede's Heavy Horse Pull, presented by DundeeWealth.

Jim and Ben, who were raised in Minnesota and Michigan, respectively, had already won the competition outright as the only team to manage a 12,500-pound full pull. But Grad, Pouso and Dodge put their heads together and decided to take a run at the Stampede record books, in order to finish off this year's edition of the world's richest horse pull in style.

"We thought they could pull more than 13,000," said Dodge. "They're hard-working horses, and Nicolas spends a lot of hours, every day, working them. He keeps them in shape. They're pretty strong."

Pouso and his friend Alejandro Pedrozo arrived in Canada about a year-and-a-half ago to work with the Soderghen Ranches horses after a chance meeting with Grad in South America.

"I spotted Nicolas down in Uruguay when I was down there on vacation," said Grad. "He was looking after horses. I thought, 'You know, a guy like that would do me a lot of good.' Things have worked out really well. Both boys have a very strong work ethic."



Pouso has settled right in on the ranch -- enough so that he has no plans to return to the southern hemisphere.

"Kind of cold here in the winter," grinned Pouso, whose outfit earned a \$3,000 winner's cheque. "I used to train colts back home, but I came up here to help Stan with the heavy horses. It's been a lot of fun."

The outfit of Cochrane's Dennis Weinberger, flying the Canadian Western Agribition banner, finished second, and earned \$2,500, after Belgian horses Billy and Dan managed 150 inches at 12,500 pounds.

The Vertefeuille Rempel Chartered Accountants rig of Norm Vertefeuille, out of Lumsden, Sask., placed third, picking up \$1,500, for pulling the 12,500-pound sled a distance of 42 inches.

That was more than enough to make Vertefeuille happy. His Belgian team of Ned and Kon only tipped the scales at 4,625 pounds, giving up more than 400 pounds to the winners.

"They did really well. I hadn't had them together more than four days, and they worked as a team. It was fantastic," said Vertefeuille. "The one little horse (Ned) kept the load up, and the big horse (Kon) kept 'em going."

"I didn't know what they were going to pull. We'd never had them on the big loads, because we just got 'em. First pull together."

Vertefeuille was later presented with the Class of the Class award, presented to the team that best combines pulling aptitude, sportsmanship and overall appearance.

The heavyweight division of the Stampede's Heavy Horse Pull, presented by DundeeWealth, features teams weighing in at 3,500 pounds and more.

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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).