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NEWS RELEASE

ELITE WESTERN RIDER IS THE BEST OF THE BEST

CALGARY – Winning, or even placing well, in any of the Western Performance Horse events at the Calgary Stampede is a notable career accomplishment. Winning the Elite Western Rider Award presented by Parsons – that’s a career highlight.

“Our Western Performance Horse events are all elite events in themselves,” says Peter Fraser, chair of the Stampede Western Performance Horse committee. “We have a very special group of riders who are capable of excelling in more than one of those events. The Western Elite Rider Award presented by Parsons tries to identify the best of the best inside that group.” This year the Cutting competition has been cancelled because of the flood, so the results of two the two remaining WPH events will determine the 2013 Elite Western Rider.

The events in question are very different in terms of the skill set required to compete. The Calgary Stampede Team Cattle Penning Competition presented by Calfrac Well Services, at the Okotoks Ag Society grounds on July 3 and 4 and the Calgary Stampede Working Cow Horse Classic presented by Tesla Exploration, in the Big Top on July 12th and 14th; showcase situations based on real-world ranching scenarios turned into a very serious sport.

A lot of coordination is needed in team penning, with three horse and rider combinations trying to separate designated animals from a herd and move them to a pen. Working Cow Horse is a complex combination of ‘rein work’ - which sees the horse perform a quite-elaborate routine of tasks – and ‘fence work’, involving the horse and rider controlling a single cow. “They’re both unique in their own right,” Fraser says of the two events. “Competitors have to remember what hat they’re wearing when they go into the pen.”

All riders who compete in both of the WPH events are eligible for the Elite Western Rider Award presented by Parsons. In existence since 2009, it has only been won three times and by only two riders. In 2011, no award was presented because no rider managed to finish in the top ten in more than one event. “It wasn’t that we didn’t have great competitors. It was that the competition was so tough,” explains Fraser.

The first winner of the award was Ron Mathison of Calgary, who earned the honour with a pair of fourths – one in the 14 Class final of Team Cattle Penning and the other in the Non-Pro Bridle category of the Working Cow Horse Classic. The winner in both 2010 and 2012 was Brad Pedersen of Lacombe, Alta. In 2010, Pedersen was seventh in the Open division of the Cutting Horse Competition and fifth in the Open Hackamore division of the Working Cow Horse Classic. Last year, Pedersen won the Open Bridle category of the Working Cow Horse Classic and was ninth in the Open division of the Cutting Horse Competition to take his second Elite Western Rider title.

The winner of the Elite Western Rider Award presented by Parsons shouldn’t be too hard to spot, says Fraser. The special belt buckle earned by the winner “isn’t quite the size of a dinner plate,” he says, “but it stands out. It’s something the winners wear proudly.”

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The Stampede will be webcasting all events being held in the Big Top this year. Visit [http://ag.calgary.stampede.com /big-top-ustream](http://ag.calgary.stampede.com/big-top-ustream) to see live streaming of action from the Big Top.

Agrium Western Event Centre

Scheduled for completion before the 2014 10-day Stampede, the Agrium Western Event Centre is a state-of-the-art facility for western events and agriculture education, exhibition and industry in southern Alberta. Designed to form a lasting connection between urban and rural communities, it will host an engaging, globally-focused educational program called Journey 2050, and it will play a central role in making the Calgary Stampede a year-round gathering place. For more information visit <http://corporate.calgarystampede.com/about/park-development/agrium-western-event-centre/>

About the Calgary Stampede

As we enter our second century, the Calgary Stampede celebrates the people, the animals, the land, the traditions and the values that make up the unique spirit of the west. The Calgary Stampede contributes to the quality of life in Calgary and southern Alberta through our world-renowned 10-day Stampede, year-round facilities, western events and several youth and agriculture programs. Exemplifying the theme We're Greatest Together; we are a volunteer-supported, not-for-profit community organization that preserves and promotes western heritage and values. All revenue is reinvested into Calgary Stampede programs and facilities.

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