



Al Bouchard—Healthy and (a Little More) Wealthy

Airdrie, ALTA – September 6, 2017

Al Bouchard has become one of the Ironmen of rodeo - those people who are able to not only compete for a long time but continue to do so at a high level throughout a lengthy career.

With 16 CFR appearances to his credit, the veteran tie-down roper added to his impressive resume in Armstrong over the weekend as he finished in a 3/4/5 split during the regular IPE and Stampede Tour rodeo that concluded on Saturday night, then put together an impressive 7.6 second run to take top spot in the Canadian Pro Tour Final on Sunday evening.

The weekend netted the Canadian and Calgary Stampede champion \$4950 in earnings to take his already substantial season total to over \$21,000, virtually guaranteeing the Altario, Alberta cowboy a 17th tour of duty at the Northlands Coliseum in November.

Just as important as the money was the 170 tour points Bouchard garnered over the weekend (70 during Armstrong's final tour stop and 100 for finishing first in the tour finale). The two results carried the long, tall 43 year-old past Logan Bird who had held the tour lead heading to Armstrong. And it assured Bouchard of a shot at a second Calgary Stampede victory as the tour champions in bareback, saddle bronc and bull riding along with the tie down roping and steer wrestling winners receive byes to the 2018 edition of the Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth.

Bouchard made it clear that while the trips to Edmonton and Calgary "make a guy darn happy", neither was on his mind as he made his way to the BC interior. "I haven't been doing very good for quite a while," he acknowledged. "My horse (Bo) got hurt at Ponoka and we just haven't been able to get it together since then.

"I was pretty worried about him," Bouchard admitted. "We'd been doing really well all spring but after he got hurt, it just hasn't been good. But in the practice pen this week, he was back to really working so I thought things might get a little better."

Bouchard, the last Canadian to win the Canadian tie-down roping title (2009), noted that it's nice to have another shot at winning a Canadian title. "That's the game plan every spring when I start out but it just hasn't worked out. I guess the only good thing is that the guys who've beat me rope pretty good."

Included in that group is Idaho's Matt Shiozawa who one year ago edged Bouchard on the final night as the two friends went down to their last respective runs before Shiozawa emerged as champion.

One thing Bouchard has in his favour this time around is the fact that he heads into the last weeks of the season and the CFR totally healthy. That hasn't always been the case including last year when he had to deal with a hand injury as he pursued that elusive second Canadian title.

Bouchard's solid showing wasn't the biggest payday earned by a competitor this weekend. That honour went to barrel racer Carman Pozzobon who won both the rodeo (15.796 seconds--\$3835.20) and the tour finale (15.786--\$2400), then added a 4th place \$672 cheque at her hometown rodeo in Merritt for an impressive \$6900 weekend haul.

And as with Al Bouchard, horsepower has been the key to success for the BC cowgirl. "I got 'Ripp' (Rip'n Lady) when she was three and started training her for barrels the November before her futurity year. She took to it right away and found it really easy which, of course, made my job easier as well."

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Pozzobon is all about goals and the first of her 2017 goals—capturing the season leader title is getting ever closer to being met. Her weekend winnings have taken her season total to over \$32,000 and widened the gap between herself and second place cowgirl, Lynette Brodoway who also finished second in the tour finale to keep Pozzobon at least within sight.

Next up for Pozzobon, who now makes her home in Aldergrove, BC—the CFR and a different approach this time around after a decent first CFR appearance in 2016.

“I’m going to back off going as hard for the go-round buckles and concentrate on the average,” she asserted. “That’ll be a little easier on my horse and she can just do her thing. She has a ton of heart and tries really hard every time.”

And plans are already afoot for the next of Pozzobon’s stated goals—after that run at a Canadian title—to head south in the hopes of getting to the big winter rodeos and eventually a shot at the Wrangler NFR.

“A lot depends on how I do and on sponsorship,” the thirty-one year-old horse trainer conceded, but the buzz around a lot of rodeo arenas this year was to keep an eye on the BC barrel racer and her buckskin mare. That’s probably a pretty good idea.

And in the bull riding, just twenty-four hours after announcing this would be his last year, 2006 Canadian bull riding champion, Tanner Girletz, put together a flashy 89.5 point effort on the Calgary Stampede’s Sweet Like Sugar.

“I’m going to keep my foot on the pedal right to that last bull,” the eight time CFR qualifier stated as he put out the word on his impending retirement.

That mindset clearly worked on Sunday as Girletz once again worked his magic. The result and \$2400 first place pay cheque virtually guaranteed that the popular third generation cowboy would go out the way he wanted—with one more trip to the Canadian Finals Rodeo. The win in the tour finale wasn’t enough to earn Girletz the Canadian Pro Rodeo Tour title, however. That honour and the accompanying berth at the Calgary Stampede went to Saskatchewan bull rider Todd Chotowetz who garnered the highest number of points among those who attended all of the Tour events - a requirement for competing at the Tour Finale and earning the overall Tour Championship. Chotowetz joins Bouchard, bareback rider Jake Vold, bronc rider Layton Green and Scott Guenther who just edged Tanner Milan for the tour’s steer wrestling title. Additional Tour Champions (though no Stampede bye is granted in these events) are barrel racer Lynette Brodoway and team ropers Riley Roy (header) and Brady Chappel (heeler).

For complete Armstrong and Merritt results, go to rodeocanada.com

This week cowboys and cowgirls point their rigs in the direction of Medicine Lodge, Alberta for a Saturday, 2 pm performance (new time).

About the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association

The Canadian Professional Rodeo Association (CPRA) with headquarters in Airdrie, Alberta is the sanctioning body for professional rodeo in Canada. The CPRA approves over 50 events annually with a total payout exceeding \$5.1 million. Join us September 29-30, 2017 for our 4th Annual Grass Roots Final (at the Agrium Western Event Centre, Stampede Park in Calgary, Alberta) and for our premiere event - the Canadian Finals Rodeo (CFR) November 8-12, 2017 at Northlands Coliseum in Edmonton, Alberta. Follow us on Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat at @prorodeocanada, like Canadian Professional Rodeo Association on Facebook or online at RodeoCanada.com.

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