

My fondest Manitoba Derby memory . . .

The winning entry with congratulations:

"Enjoying the sport of horse racing has many aspects to it. I have watched on television, been to race tracks, watched online and followed storylines on social media. I have picked the winner every time I have gone to the Kentucky Derby and I have been to six Breeders' Cups!"

"At Santa Anita a few years ago, I was leaving the parking lot when I stopped for a hitchhiker, of sorts. She couldn't hail a taxi so I offered a ride to their hotel – a lady and her friend who, she told me, was a trainer in Canada and she trained a horse that won the Manitoba Derby back in the day.

"Well that's one place I haven't been, I thought!

"The opportunity came in 2016. I drove from Superior, Wisconsin, to Winnipeg, Manitoba. Along the way, I learned about the beautiful parks and campgrounds. I learned about the Kenora Thistles winning the Stanley Cup (1907), and I learned what a wonderful city Winnipeg is! (I still love the phrase "Winnipeggers!")

"At Assiniboia Downs, I was surprised to see the Royal Canadian Mounties on their horses maneuvering to music and commands. The food was great and the race itself was awesome!

"But my favorite moment in the stands was, as I was seeing thousands of ordinary everyday Canadians being so polite to one another, very friendly and feeling the energy of the crowd, when I said to the young couple sitting next to me, 'Congratulations on your new baby!' The mother holding her child said, 'It's his first derby.'

*"Hmmm, I thought. Mine, too." – **Jeff Monaghan**, Superior, Wisconsin*

Other entries with thanks (unedited):

Hi Ivan,

Read your column in The Metro every week. Fondest memory: 2010 – Cherokee's Goal came 2nd in the Derby. Of course we all hoped for 1st. Great day up in the lounge with Hyroad stable. Cherokee was horse of the year in 2010. Memorable event for Kent Coleman one of the owners. He loved that horse. Sadly Kent has passed but the event was always one of his favourite days and memories. Hard to believe that was 8 years ago! Don't spend much time at the track these days but many fond memories of days past with friends. Assiniboia Downs - a great place for the whole family to spend time with the wide open space. -- **Sandra Coleman**

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My fondest memory of the Manitoba Derby well I have 2 first was going to my first ever derby at 11 yrs old while my dad was working at the track to see my all time favorite horse Proven Reserve coming 2nd in the derby in 85 broke my heart then in 88 watching No Malice and Julie Krone to become the first women to win the derby -- **Robert Dubois**

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My fondest derby memory is going with my dad when I was a kid and getting to ride the ponys. -- **Brett Roberts**

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We have two Derby Days that still bring smiles.

1. 1995: our syndicate (Winover) entered a horse called Pay as you Play in the Derby. At the time, only one member of the syndicate wanted to enter the horse but as he really wanted to, we all agreed. There were 9 horses in field, our horse came in 7th. Vaguely remember we got back our entrance/starter fees. But most fun was we beat Phil Kives and really enjoyed the "red carpet treatment" for Derby participants - free lunch, cocktail party before and after, etc. We didn't expect tp win and didn't but really was a fun day.

2. 2006 my fondest memory is winning the Hat contest with a "My Fair Lady hat".. Prize money was \$25 at ASD. After we went to Edmonton for Canadian Derby. I entered their hat contest and won again. Edmonton had a great system with professional photographer, pictures, hat parade, etc. This time prize was \$1000.00 in cash and gifts and beautiful photos. Dave laughingly said we should 'take hat and drive to next leg of Derby in Vancouver - he had to work so we didn't. Was truly a fun year. -- **Anne and Dave Champion**

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Watching Merrys jay win for owner Hugh Jackson from Souris, MB. Manitoba all the way. -- **Pat Taylor**

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My first (and sadly only) derby memory is when I visited Winnipeg in the summer of 2017. I was at the downs, and it was a long day. I wish I had actually stayed for the derby itself ,but I was growing tired, so I got on the bus and went back to Transcona where I was staying, just a half hour before the derby was to run(a choice I deeply regret now). I live in BC, so it's not an easy drive to the downs. The good news is that I will return to the downs, hopefully next season, with an entry of my own. Not sure if that entry would be allowed in the derby, but we'll likely be at the downs nonetheless. -- **Eryn MacDonald**

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I still remember the 1972 Manitoba Derby that I attended with my Dad, most likely my first Manitoba Derby. Gentleman Conn was a popular choice as he was 17 hands tall, which is very tall for a horse. My Dad took me to the paddock that day and we could very well see how much taller he was than all the other horses. I thought, "how could he possibly lose"? and asked my Dad to put a win bet on him for me.

There were only six horses in the field that year, and Conn finished a disappointing 4th or 5th, never really challenging in the race. Nice Dancer went wire to wire, and at a nice price if I remember correctly. My Dad won some money on the race, but I did not. Still, it was exciting to watch the race and to see the giant horse in the paddock before the race, even if he didn't run a very good race on my investment. Other horses in the field as I can best remember were Victoria's Song (a filly), Suffix, Western Dangler and one other entry whose name escapes me now. -- **Jim Rinde**, Gahanna, OH

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Manitoba Derby watching Breaker Breaker almost beating Scotman – **Dave Champion**

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I rarely write into these kinds of things but I had to send you thoughts on my favourite derby, from way back in 1994. I was only 12 years old, going to the races with my older brother who got me hooked on the sport, and I saw the great ASD sprinter P.C's Bluff score a big derby win. I bet on him to win based on his wins going short and thought he could carry his speed two-turns but I only had \$2 (since I was so young) so I didn't win much. Still, the win was so memorable to me because I realized that I could cheer so hard for something that wouldn't win me much money but stick with me almost 25 years later.

Thanks for the Insider...I read it every week. Keep up the good work, -- **Troy Popadynetz**

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Thirty four years ago (1984) I went on my first official date with Roger to the Manitoba Derby Day. I was so excited, I had never been to the races before. I remember all the excitement, the fancy hats and lots of people. We sat in the grandstands and Roger patiently taught me how to read a program. I even got to cash some winning tickets from playing the favourites. We are still coming to the races together. We have made great friends, great memories, and even occasionally money. -- **Judy Bamburak**

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My memories or the Derby are not of a single race but rather the impressive horses and riders we were able to see on a regular basis. Each year I looked with anticipation on who might be coming from Woodbine. We regularly saw Queens Plate winners such as L'Engelour and Steady Growth or horse of the year Franfreluche (probably the best horse ever to race at the Down) and riders such as Hawley and Gomez who came to ride them.

Regrettably with the advent of synthetic turf and \$74,000 allowance races we get virtually nothing from Woodbine and no longer have the chance to see horses such as Holy Helena or Wonder Gadot at our race track. Is the race exciting? Certainly but the quality of horses does not match the past. -- **Jim Roberts**

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That would be last year when escape clause came second in the derby...My partner is the same age as the derby and celebrates his 70th birthday the same day...I would love to win them and have that be another one of our fondest memories. Thanks. -- **Sherri Kitson**

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This one is hands down, without a doubt, the best and most memorable Derby Winner is..... Merry,s Jay in 1976. I was there that day and the air was electric. Rather than me trying to describe it ... my sentiments would be in Bob's article about it please see Bob's write up about it. Yes there were many but this one was the best. -- **Dan Coffell**