

ASSINIBOIA DOWNS



DINING



BET NOW



140 VLTS

The Inside Track | Issue #5 | Dec. 9, 2021

*Open daily from 10 a.m. to 1 a.m.
Full immunization and government issued I.D. required to attend Assiniboia Downs.*

In this edition . . .

- What's happening at the Downs?
- ASD Runner wins Final Furlong Award
- A Snapshot in Time
- Trainer Travels
- Photo of The Week
- Reckless Ride. Hefty Suspension.
- NFL Week 14 with TravyFootball
- Top Jock from Winnipeg's North End

Do the Downs!



12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS WAGERING BONUSES

- Earn 1% cash back on all eligible wagers on all tracks Sunday, Dec. 12 through Thursday, Dec.

23. Minimum total wagered \$1,000. Maximum deposit \$100. (\$2.10 payoffs not included.)

Wagers must be made on your HPI account to qualify.

12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS VLT DRAWS

- Enter your name at the VLT cage Monday, Dec. 13 through Thursday, Dec. 24 for a chance to pick an ornament from the Christmas tree for up to **\$100 CASH!**
- **Draws will be made throughout the day and evening and you must be present to win.**



HANDICAPPER OF THE YEAR - Who will be crowned Handicapper of the Year? It all comes down to the final tournament of 2021 on Saturday, Dec. 18. See standings [here](#). The ASD Handicapper of the Year wins a trip for two to Las Vegas and entry into the Horseplayer World Series or \$2,500 cash! 2nd place is worth \$500 and 3rd wins you \$250. PLUS: \$1,750 in Dec. 18 tournament prize money is up for grabs!

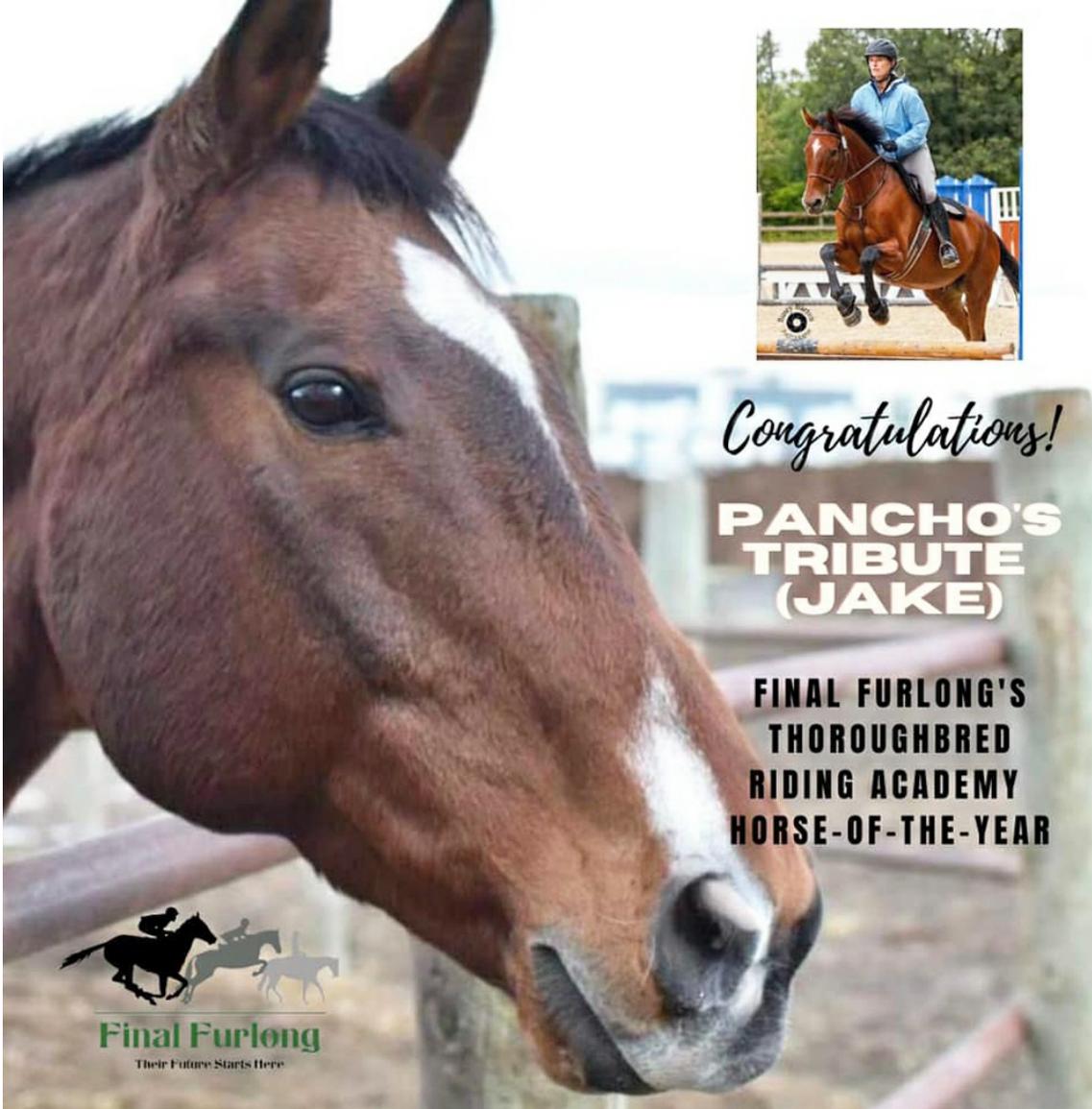
CHRISTMAS SPECIAL - Enjoy turkey, ham, mashed potatoes, Chef's vegetables, stuffing, gravy and more for only \$21.95. The plated special will be served in the Clubhouse Wednesday, Dec. 22 and Thursday, Dec. 23 from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. and Friday, Dec. 24 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Reservations are required. Call 204-885-3330.



NEW YEAR'S EVE GALA - Join us on Friday, Dec. 31 at ASD for our fabulous New Year's Eve Gala hosted by Jeff Molnar from QX104 FM (a variety of music will be played.) Enjoy a delicious buffet, prize draws, party favours, late night snack and free coat check. DJ music and dance lights. Tickets \$75. Call 204-885-3330. **Tickets are selling fast and limited tickets remain. Purchase your tickets today!**

At The Post with G.S. Thompson

Former ASD Runner wins Final Furlong Award
Pancho's Tribute (Jake) still going strong at 19!



Congratulations!

**PANCHO'S
TRIBUTE
(JAKE)**

**FINAL FURLONG'S
THOROUGHBRED
RIDING ACADEMY
HORSE-OF-THE-YEAR**



Pancho's Tribute aka "Jake" shown in action above. Final Furlong / Rusty Barton photo.

Congratulations to Pancho's Tribute aka "Jake" on his selection as the 2021 Final Furlong Thoroughbred Riding Academy Horse-of-the-Year!

The 19-year-old gelding by Bay Shore Stakes (G3) winner Pancho Villa has had a long and successful career for two different owners since leaving the track in 2006 and he's still going strong. Jake was retired by local trainer Terry Wedge and his family as a 4-year-old after compiling a record of 1-4-3 from 18 starts. His lone win came at Assiniboia Downs on August 7, 2005.

Jake was originally purchased off the track by Jan Micay, and he gave his new owner 12 wonderful years. When Jan could no longer ride, she knew Jake still had much to give and found him a new home with Ashley Buss of Grand Oak Meadows Stables on McCreary Road in Winnipeg.

"Jan Micay was right!" said Buss in an article written by Final Furlong board member Allan Gray. "He still has so much to teach people. I would definitely say he is an amazing horse and is irreplaceable!"

Jake has become a favourite of students at Grand Oak Meadows. "In 2020 I realized a lifelong dream of learning to ride," said one of his fans. "I have learned to walk, trot, and canter. Now I'm even learning to jump at the age of 58. I have enjoyed over 150 rides on him since the first one. He is always kind, willing, dependable and most of all patient. I wish he were mine, but then so many others would not get to experience his awesomeness."

Final Furlong is a registered non-profit organization in Manitoba that helps racehorses find new homes after they have finished their racing careers. Last year they helped over one hundred horses like Jake find new homes.

"It's a needed service," said Final Furlong President April Keedian, who also sometimes rescues and boards horses until they can find new homes. "We don't sell the horses ourselves. We facilitate the connection. Sellers from the track contact us and we list the horses on the Final Furlong Facebook page. Buyers contact the sellers directly.

"There's a huge demand for these horses and they usually sell fast. We've had horses sell in as little as 15 minutes. The people at the track are very invested in finding their horses new careers and they love following them when they leave the track. And they are very generous with their donations, even if the horse hasn't been at the track for 10 years. They just love horses and want to see them go on to satisfying and fulfilling careers."

Final Furlong doesn't charge for their services. They run on donations (Assiniboia Downs is a large supporter.) With that in mind, they'll be selling logo space on their new horse trailer. A 3-by-3-foot logo will sell for \$1,000 and be placed on the Final Furlong trailer for five years, giving businesses a chance to support a great cause while also aligning themselves with an organization doing something special for horses. If you would like more information please email info@finalfurlongcanada.com or call 204.770.6323.

"Hopefully we'll run out of space," said Keedian.

"I second that," nickered Jake.

A Snapshot in Time



From a concentration camp in Poland to the top of the racing world in Canada, the late Hugo Dittfach won the first ever riding title at Assiniboia Downs in 1958. He went on to win 4,000 races including the 1961 Queen's Plate aboard 20-1 Blue Light, defeating the world's leading race-winning jockey Johnny Longden aboard favourite Just Don't Shove. Dittfach won Canada's first Sovereign Award for Outstanding Jockey in 1975, was

inducted into the [Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame](#) in 1983, and was honoured with the Avelino Gomez Memorial Award in 1991. Photo courtesy of ASD Track Historian Bob Gates.

Trainer Travels

Gourneau, Brown, Duncan, Buffalo and Ross



Miss Imperial, shown here with jockey Stanley Chadee Jr. after winning the 2021 Escape Clause Stakes at ASD, will face five rivals in the 8th race at Oaklawn Park on Sunday. Jason Halstead photo.

The big guns from Assiniboia Downs are just starting to get rolling south of the border and multiple local stakes winner Miss Imperial will be leading the way for trainer Murray Duncan as she makes her first start this Sunday at Oaklawn Park.

Three-time ASD leading trainer Jerry Gourneau is at Sam Houston Race Park in Texas. Jared Brown, runner-up in the 2021 local standings to Gourneau, is at Turf Paradise in Phoenix. Murray Duncan, the second-leading money earner at ASD this summer, is enjoying the heat at Oaklawn Park in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Marvin and Deb Buffalo have already recorded a third-place finish at Turf Paradise, and Courtney Ross is also at Turf Paradise with eight horses.

We caught up with Gourneau on Tuesday as he was travelling to Sam Houston with assistant trainer Jennifer Tourangeau and her husband, jockey Sheldon Chickeness. Gourneau reported that he sold about 95% of the stock that helped him win his second

straight training title at ASD, and he'll now be supervising the conditioning of 20 horses at Sam Houston while also replenishing his stock for next year. Gourneau plans to return to ASD with 40-50 horses in the spring.

The 61-year-old First Nations Chippewa from the Turtle Mountain Reservation in Belcourt, N.D. has occasionally hinted at retirement, but he's not quite ready yet. Gourneau holds a master's degree in education and has been approached about some after-racing career opportunities in Manitoba, but right now his focus is on helping owner Henry S. Witt Jr. take home another money title at Assiniboia Downs.

Gourneau helped Witt Jr. win almost \$500,000 in purses at Assiniboia Downs in 2021 and he'll be trying to improve on that mark again next year. "It's not about winning the trainer of the year," said Gourneau. "It's always been my goal to be the highest money earner and we've accomplished that goal five years in a row."



Trainer Jerry Gourneau (second from right) and crew after winning the 2021 training title at ASD. Jason Halstead photo.

Trainer Murray Duncan's stable was the second leading money earner at ASD in 2021. The 80-year-old veteran will attempt to add a few more dollars to the coffers for himself and partner, the Estate of Garryle B. Stewart, in the eighth race at Oaklawn Park this Sunday, when their Miss Imperial faces five rivals in a \$50,000 optional claimer. Duncan claimed Miss Imperial for \$25,000 at Oaklawn Park two years ago and has since won eight stakes at ASD with the 5-year-old Maclean's Music mare.

"She's training well," said Duncan. "She's had some nice works. There's a tough New York-bred in there that has made over \$400,000. I just hope she runs okay and comes back good."

Trainer Jared Brown, who had one of his best years ever to finish second in the standings at ASD in 2021 with 40 wins, reports that he has eight horses at Turf Paradise including four that raced at ASD. All were given a brief vacation, and local fans will certainly remember Mark Ye Well, the top claimer at ASD this summer. Mark Ye Well won the beauty contest at ASD this spring and ran to his looks, winning five of nine starts at the Downs and finishing second twice. "He had the second fastest work here on Monday," said Brown.



Jared Brown trainee and 2021 Claimer of the Year favourite Mark Ye Well exercising this spring at ASD with former jockey Gary Stein. George Williams photo.

Trainer Marvin Buffalo and his wife Deb have already finished third with one of their four horses at Turf Paradise and they also plan to claim a couple horses for the 2022 season at ASD. Deb is also our Photo of the Week star in this issue! See photo below.

Courtney Ross, who has spent the past two summers establishing her stable at ASD, is also at Turf Paradise with eight horses. Originally from Saskatoon, the 25-year-old plans to add more horses to her stable over the winter and return to ASD in the spring.

Murray Duncan, who is at the opposite end of the age spectrum, also plans to claim a horse or two at Oaklawn Park, and he's starting to turn it up a notch.

"I'm just getting fit," said Duncan, who also has 2021 Gold Cup winner Plentiful with him. "The horses are dragging me around. I walked for miles today. I'm not even the oldest trainer here. I think Wayne Lukas (86) is older than me."

Duncan spent his share of time living in tack rooms in the sixties when he was training horses like 7-in-a-row-winner Precambrian. He's now roughing it in a hotel room in Arkansas. "It's not too bad," he said. "I can cook in here. I don't eat out much. I had a steak today. I don't usually eat that high on the hog."

Nothing has changed. The winners just keep coming.

Photo of the Week



Lifesbeengoodsofar gets a hug from Deb Buffalo at Turf Paradise.

Trainer Marvin Buffalo and wife Deb have settled into Turf Paradise in Phoenix for the winter with four horses including former Royal Frolic Overnight Stakes winner Lifesbeengoodsofar.

Based on the photo above, and a recent third-place finish in a Starter Optional Claiming race on the turf at 23-1, the 5-year-old Ministers Wildcat gelding is really enjoying his new digs in sun country.

Continuing to build their operation, Marvin and Deb purchased two yearlings at the 2021 Arizona Thoroughbred Breeders Association Fall Mixed Sale and plan to claim a few more runners before heading back to Assiniboia Downs in the spring. The couple went on a roll this summer at ASD, winning with four starters in a row from August 17-23 and continuing to win at a strong 25% clip throughout the year, compiling a record of 13-8-6 from 53 starts.

Lifesbeengoodsofar just helped them break the \$100,000 mark in purses for 2021. Did the hugs make a difference?

You bet they did.

Do you have an interesting photo you would like showcased in an upcoming newsletter? Email your photos to theinsidetrack@ASDowns.com.

In The News



Irada Ortiz Jr. aboard Gran Casique (arrow) angles over to the rail, bumping Ragtime Blues and causing jockey Omar Hernandez Moreno to be unseated. Paulick Report photo.

Irada Ortiz Jr.'s Reckless Ride A Litmus Test For Stewards

Irada Ortiz Jr. is arguably the best rider in the game right now, but even top jockeys can take their dominance too far. According to the Paulick Report, "Ten years from now, when Irada Ortiz Jr. is inducted into the National Museum of Racing Hall of Fame in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., his ride aboard Gran Casique in Friday's (Dec. 3) eighth race at Aqueduct will not make the highlight reel."

Additionally, on Saturday Ortiz survived a stewards inquiry to win the Remsen Stakes (G2) aboard Mo Donegal, and a claim of foul by Hall of Fame jockey John Velazquez to win the Demoiselle (G2) aboard Nest. On Sunday, Ortiz received a 30-calendar-day suspension from the board of stewards at Aqueduct.

Did they get it right?

Road to the Kentucky Derby 2022

- Dec. 11 - Los Alamitos Futurity
- Dec. 17 - Springboard Mile - Remington
- Dec. 26 - Gun Runner - Fair Grounds
- Jan. 1 - Smarty Jones - Oaklawn
- Jan. 1 - Jerome - Aqueduct
- Jan. 1 - Sham - Santa Anita



Full list of Kentucky Derby prep races [here](#)

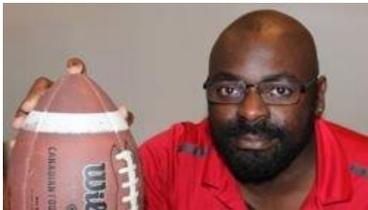
Carryover Watch & Programs

- [Gulfstream](#) Jackpot Pick 6 (Dec. 9) - \$142,834
 - [Charles Town](#) Jackpot Pick 6 (Dec. 9) - \$111,711
 - [Lone Star](#) Super Hi-5 Jackpot (Dec. 9) - \$53,415
 - See all carryovers [here](#)
-

"I Won Bigg" Betting Group - Saturdays at ASD

The "I Won Bigg" betting group meets every Saturday at 10:30 a.m. in the ASD Clubhouse. Leading the discussions are veteran handicappers Ivan Bigg and Larry Liebrecht. This Saturday the group will be playing the late Pick 5 at Tampa Bay. \$20 buys you a share in this week's ticket. Email Larry at larry@ampereelectric.ca for more information.

NFL Week 14 with TravyFootball



Bucs over Bills (Sunday afternoon): Someone needs to remind Tom Brady that he's 44, not 24. Everything that can be said about Mr. Brady has been said already, but it never ceases to amaze me how easy he makes it look on the field at his age. He leads the league in passing yards (3,771) and in touchdown passes (34), not to mention the Bucs are on a three-game win streak. If you ask me, Brady should be adding another MVP trophy to his resume after the season is said and done.

Packers over Bears (Sunday night): Divisional games are usually tougher because of the familiarity with the three other teams you face on a regular basis. I didn't give the Bears much of a chance here for many reasons. They don't even know who will be starting at QB, the coach is on borrowed time, and their playoff chances are slim to none. If all that wasn't bad enough, they have to face a well rested Packers team coming off a bye week. Aaron Rodgers' fractured toe should be slightly better since they didn't have to play last week, but he's still debating if he should have surgery on it or not. It hasn't really hindered him at all, it's just a matter how much pain he can tolerate.

Cardinals over Rams (Monday night): If I'm a member of the Arizona Cardinals, I would be feeling quite disrespected right now. Anytime the Super Bowl is mentioned, the Cards are never included in the conversation. Packers, Bucs, Rams, even the Cowboys, all get mentioned before Arizona does. All this despite having the best record in the entire league (10-2) and winning every one of their road games by a minimum of 10 points. They defeated the Rams earlier this season 37-20, and another victory would finally get analysts and fans to take this team seriously.

LAST WEEK'S PICKS: 2-1

The Best of Bob

by ASD Historian Bob Gates

Pop quiz time... Do you know the name of the jockey who can boast the following? "I came from Winnipeg's North End, 500 Magnus to be exact. I won three leading rider titles. I won the Winnipeg Futurity three years in-a-row." Click [here](#) to reveal this icon from the early days of Assiniboia Downs (from July 21, 2021.)



Feedback

We would love to hear from you! Email your comments and/or suggestions to theinsidetrack@ASDowns.com



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