

Plenty of Reindeer Games at Wednesday's Tree Lighting



By Brock Weir

Santa's reindeer are in a competition right now on just who will be joining him in Aurora next Wednesday as he helps turn on the lights of Aurora's Official Christmas Tree.

After a rollicking Santa Under the Stars on Saturday night, Santa and at least five of his celebrated reindeer are set to make another trip to Aurora from the North Pole on Wednesday, December 7 for a night of family fun at Town Hall, and while Santa is set to help flip the light switch the Town of Aurora's Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony, which runs from 6.30 to 8.30 p.m., is Mrs. Claus' time to shine.

But, how many of the reindeer will make the cut?

We sat down with Dasher, Santa's lead (and fastest) reindeer on what they're doing to stay in shape and get ready for the big day.

Brock Weir: Santa says you're always the big winner at the Reindeer Games, so I guess you're a shoe-in for next Wednesday.

Dasher: I'm pretty confident, but there are always Reindeer Games to decide.

BW: Is there a friendly wager going on?

D: I can't say because Santa kinda forbids betting, but I am really excited to be heading back to Aurora. We got to spend some time with the kids up close at the Tree Lighting Ceremony last year. But, being out on the deck of the Seniors' Centre was a little bit chilly. We're used to a barn. This year we're going to be inside Petch House and we just have to make sure our big antlers can clear the sides of the door, but I understand all those little details have been taken care of.

BW: Do you know anything about Petch House?

D: I hear it smells amazing, being over 150 years old. We're really old too, so this is like going back in time. I am really excited to be in a heritage place.

BW: What do you do between the end of your long flight and when the public arrive?

D: It is like a homecoming. With the amount of love the kids and adults gave us last year, all of us were blown away.

BW: Do you get a sneak peek of any of the events before the crowds get there?

D: I have heard, and I don't know for certain, but I have heard the lighting on the tree will be really spectacular this year. Something different is being done to the tree, but my antlers are only so big for eavesdropping on stories. But, I understand the tree lighting ceremony is going to be something not to miss. I don't get to see this, but I heard the families last year talking about the fire jugglers and the fire juggling show that takes place in front of the tree. I wish I got to see that, but the stories I heard from families last year were pretty spectacular.

BW: What have Mr. and Mrs. Claus doing to get ready for the night?

D: The thing I really love about the Tree Lighting is Mrs. Claus gets to come out. She actually takes charge of us that night because she is going to be inside the Seniors' Centre reading our favourite story, so it is kind of cool that she gets to come out at these events because they always vie to get Santa's attention.

BW: Will Mrs. Claus have any special guests?

D: I don't get to see this, but the Canadian Children's Theatre Company is going to be doing a theatre performance of Frosty the Snowman. You can imagine how much we love Frosty because clearly we're surrounded by snow 12 months of the year. Having youth performers is really special in itself but unfortunately we're going to have to just hear about it because we're going to be in Petch House, but I hope the families tell us all about it! People won't be able to escape the 'Frosty' theme though. There will be Frosty-themed games, and even a craft inside the Petch House for kids to make while we're busy posing for Selfies with their siblings or parents.

BW: So, you guys get to stay warm in Petch House, but what do the organizers have planned to keep Aurorans warm as well?

D: Even though Aurora uses LED lights, they still give off a lot of warmth. There will also be free hot chocolate and clementines throughout the evening. I am kind of glad they chose clementines because we really like apples and if people snuck us apple treats we would all have a belly ache. They were smart to bring out the clementines because I wouldn't touch one!

BW: Do you think you will meet new families this year?

D: The tree lighting ceremony is such a special event, regardless of what your family holiday traditions are. It is an event that is inclusive of everyone's traditions and we welcome them all. Our reindeer are pretty proud of ourselves, so we love to meet people and all activities cater to the many different ages, whether families that have little ones, or grandparents in tow. There is always something for everyone.

BW: You're right, you do sound pretty confident you'll be making the trip this year. Who else from the herd would you like to join you?

D: We all like to do everything together, but Dancer is one of Santa's prettiest reindeer so we will get to see if she makes that cut. Maybe the kids will get to see Dancer if she is able to come.

BW: It sounds like you and Dancer might have a bit of a thing going.

D: I never reveal my secrets up front, but I think if Dancer came we would pose really well for pictures together, especially for selfies. I will make sure my Santa brushes my teeth and I am ready to go.

BW: Maybe a spritz of cologne to woo Dancer?

D: I think our natural cologne is spiffy enough for her.

BW: Good luck!