

Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame inductees announced

Aurora, King and Caledon will see new representation in the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame's Class of 2020.

The Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame selects ten inductees each year to join a prestigious group of individuals and thoroughbreds.

King City native and thoroughbred horse ?Play the King? from Kinghaven Farms, standardbred horse McWicked, owned by the owner of SSG Gloves in Aurora, Ed James, and Caledon resident Michael Keogh have been announced as the inductees, according to the Hall.

Linda Rainey, Managing Director of the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame, says the induction process is quite extensive.

?It's based on significant contributions to horse racing in Canada,? she explains. ?It's voted on two committees for an individual to be inducted.?

The nominating committee oversees all of the public submissions. People within this committee have historical knowledge of the sport, current racing knowledge, breeding and background knowledge. These votes determine who proceeds to the ballot.

Rainey believes there were 80 nominations per breed presented to the Standardbred and Thoroughbred Nomination Committees this year.

Ballots are categorized and sent off to the final group of voters who ultimately decide which inductees are named for the year -- all of whom, of course, hold notable records to entice voters.

Trained by Roger Attfield, Play the King has had an exceptional four-year career. When the horse was only four years of age, victory at the Toboggan Handicap (G3) in Aqueduct sparked a good run of form. Victories at Jacques Cartier, Vigil Handicap, Toronto Budweiser Breeders' Cup at Woodbine, Suffolk Sprint in Boston (G3) and Nearctic Stakes (G3) earned the horse the 1987 Sovereign Award champion as Canada's top, older male horse and champion sprinter.

In 1988, Play the King repeated as Sovereign Award champion with another championship at Woodbine, Nearctic Stakes (G3), the Breeder's Cup Sprint (G1) and Churchill Downs.

The second horse nominated from the local areas is McWicked from Aurora, owned by Ed James' SSG Stables.

Recently retired from racing, McWicked earned \$5.1 million during a race career that began in 2013 and included 40 wins in 110 starts while setting his lifetime mark of 1:46.2 at age 7.

During his career McWicked won four O'Brien awards as Canada's top Older Pacing Horse of the Year in 2018 and 2019 and overall Horse of the Year in 2018.

His 2018 bankroll of \$1.662 million made him the oldest horse to top North American harness racing's earnings standings at the age of seven, and his \$5.1 million in career earnings makes him the richest pacing stallion in the history of the sport.

Finally, Bolton resident Michael Keogh, former trainer for the Hall of Fame builder Gus Schickedanz, has been racing since 1993.

In 2,689 starts, Keogh has amassed 330 wins and earning over \$21.5 million.

He is most famously known for winning the Queen's Plate twice in 1999 with Woodcarver, and again in 2003 with Wando who went on to win the Canadian Triple Crown.

Other Keogh trained horses include Sovereign Award-winners Mobil and Langfuhr. Early in his career Keogh was an assistant to Hall of Fame trainer Roger Attfield from 1986-1993.

During that time Keogh worked with one of his favourite horses, Play the King who coincidentally is also being inducted to the CHRHF in 2020.

Since its establishment in 1976, the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame holds 500 inductees. It is open to the public at Woodbine Racetrack in Etobicoke.

Other 2020 Hall of Fame inductees representing thoroughbreds include Builder Sue Leslie, Jockey Gary Boulanger and horse Tepin.

Standardbred Inductees include Driver Paul MacDonell, Trainer Ben Wallace, female horse Amour Angus and veteran horse Rambling Willie.

By Robert Belardi