

REPRESENTING CANADA:

JAMES MACDONALD

On August 2, Standardbred Canada announced that James MacDonald will represent Canada in the upcoming 2017 World Driving Championship, taking place from August 12 to August 18 at racetracks across the country.

MacDonald, 31, was born in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, and currently resides in Guelph, Ontario with his wife Jenna (daughter of driver Paul MacDonell) and their 11 month old son, Griffin. He stands among the top five drivers in Canada, in 2017, with \$1.8 million earned, and has 95 wins so far this season.

MacDonald replaces Brandon Campbell in the WDC. On August 1, Standardbred Canada announced that Campbell was removed as Canada's representative.

TROT Magazine sat down with James to talk about the upcoming event.



WDC
WORLD DRIVING CHAMPIONSHIP
CANADA 2017



Photo by New Image Media

TROT: *What was your first thought when you were asked about representing Canada?*

MacDonald: Excitement, obviously. It was never a question if I was going to go. It was, "Sign me up. I'm really excited." I can't wait to wear the red and white. It means a lot obviously, I would've liked if I had gone on different terms, but when you get the chance to represent Canada, it's a big deal. I watch the World Juniors every year, and the Olympic hockey, and any time there's big country wide support for one Canadian team or person, everyone gets behind them.

TROT: *Tell us about your introduction to harness racing?*

MacDonald: We grew up on a horse farm, my dad has broodmares. My mom took [win] pictures at the

track. From the day I was born, I was a track rat. I was there all the time, I helped my mom. I never missed a Gold Cup and Saucer. Until two years ago, I've seen every single one for as long as I can remember. My first job was at the canteen at the racetrack, I worked there for a couple years as the fry guy. My whole family is involved - my brothers, Mark and Anthony both drive, they left home when they were really young, to go pursue careers in racing. My brother, Curtis, does the graphics, my brother Lloyd did the same thing with graphics, and my other brother, Bobby, is a farrier in PEI. We're all in it, there were really no other options for us. We were bred into it.

I actually was the only one that wasn't a die-hard horse fan. When I was 17 or 18 I had no ambition

to race horses. After I graduated grade 12, I went to Campbellville and lived with Anthony and worked at his barn, and I hated it. So I went home and took a year of marketing and advertising at Holland College. Anthony called me again in the summer, he was short of help and so I went back and I loved it. So I stayed. I've made some new friends and I've been in it ever since. Our whole family is deeply rooted into harness racing, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

TROT: *What are your expectations for the event?*

MacDonald: Everything is a big challenge. The field size, 11 horses at some of those small tracks will be a lot. When we race nine in London, it's a zoo, it's a lot. So racing 11 at Three Rivers and Charlottetown



Photo by New Image Media

FAST FACTS

JAMES MACDONALD

- Age: 31
- Career Wins: 1,677
- Career Earnings: \$22.4 million
- Years Driving: 9 years
- Race I Would Like To Win:
Gold Cup & Saucer
- Best Advice : “Win and lose with class.”
- Worth Noting: James is one of the leading drivers on the Woodbine / Mohawk circuit. In 2016, he won the Ontario Regional Driving Championship and was runner up in the National Driving Championship.

will be different and a little scary. I've raced at all five tracks, and I've won at each of them, including two races I won in Calgary last year when we were out there for a charity event. But it's completely different when you have 11 different drivers. I think racing at Mohawk for me is an advantage because I know the track. At the same time I have to go into it with a completely open mind that the racing is going to be different than what I'm used to, and just do the best I can. I can't wait to see all over Canada.

TROT: What will be your driving strategy against drivers from around the world?

MacDonald: I've talked with (past WDC champion) Jody Jamieson, and I will have a lot more talks with him about strategy and just driver challenges in general. I watched Jody compete in Australia and Trevor when it was in France. I've watched enough of them to know it's a completely different style of racing. I'm going to have to go in with a new look on racing if I want to compete, that's for sure. I think the North American style drivers have an advantage when you're racing here

because not only do we know the style of the race, but the horses have a style too.

TROT: Will you be nervous?

MacDonald: I don't think I'll have any nerves until we get to PEI, probably. Hopefully I'll be in the hunt and perform well in front of people I haven't seen in awhile, and people will be cheering for me. So there might be some nerves come PEI, but once you get on the track it's all business usually. It doesn't matter what you're racing for, you still have to win.

TROT: What will it be like for the other drivers when they experience Charlottetown, your hometown, on the final night of the WDC?

MacDonald: It'll be a thrill. The only thing I wish is that it was Saturday night so they could see the crowd in the stands (on Gold Cup & Saucer night). It's an atmosphere I've never seen in racing. To compete in a challenge like this with a big crowd like that - I'm not sure what the racing is like where they're from - but I'm sure they'll be nervous. It's a big stage in PEI during Old Home Week. The people absolutely love harness racing out there and these guys will be treated really well I'm sure.