

## **HORSEMANSHIP CANDIDATES**

### **MARK ETSSELL**

Following a 2022 campaign which saw him exceed \$1 million in seasonal earnings for the first time in his training career, Mark Etsell followed that up with yet another seven-figure season in 2023.

The talented horseman has been in the spotlight over the last couple of seasons primarily due to his star mare, Adare Castle, who captured O'Brien Award honours as a sophomore in 2022. The four-year-old daughter of Muscle Mass was Etsell's top money earner in 2021 and 2022, but that wasn't the case in 2023, as a rookie trotting colt stepped into the spotlight to earn that billing.

Willowtime, a two-year-old colt developed by Etsell, made his presence felt as a freshman, winning four of his five starts this season, and amassing \$355,619 in his first year under the lights. Each one of his starts were stakes engagements, and he dominated the local provincial program, winning two Ontario Sires Stakes Gold legs, as well as the \$300,000 Super Final for two-year-old trotting colts. He also captured a division of the Grand Circuit Champlain Stakes. The homebred of breeder/co-owner Terry Devos is another accent for Etsell, whose ability to develop young, bargain-priced trotters has been a focal point.

To go along with his second straight \$1 million+ campaign, Etsell set career-highs in wins (32) and had a sizzling UTRS of 0.321. The horseman was no stranger to sitting in the bike either, as he drove 44 starters to three victories and just shy of \$67,000 in purse-earnings.

<b>TRAINING</b>	<b>STARTS</b>	<b>1sts</b>	<b>2nds</b>	<b>3rds</b>	<b>Earnings</b>	<b>UTRS</b>
	<b>182</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>\$1,047,705</b>	<b>0.321</b>

<b>DRIVER</b>	<b>STARTS</b>	<b>1sts</b>	<b>2nds</b>	<b>3rds</b>	<b>Earnings</b>	<b>UDRS</b>
	<b>44</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>\$66,935</b>	<b>0.214</b>

## **ROD HENNESSY**

Longtime Alberta horseman, Rod Hennessy enjoyed a memorable year in 2023. With a UTRS of 0.389, which is easily a career-best, the conditioner's successful campaign has been mostly associated with a son and a daughter of popular Alberta sire, Vertical Horizon.

Two-year-old filly Byby Baby Byby found success in the Alberta Sires Stakes program, where she went a perfect 3-3, headlined by a 1:54.3 score in the \$75,000 ABSS Super Final, where she won by 4 ½ lengths. The freshman filly had four wins in seven starts overall, while amassing \$79,625 in earnings.

Hennessy was also linked to Western Canadian racing history this year, as his stable star, Shark Week, made headlines when becoming the first horse in Western Canada to win in sub 1:50. On June 3rd at Century Downs Racetrack and Casino, the five-year-old stopped the clock in 1:49.2, en route to an eight length score while solidifying the monumental feat. Shark Week has exceeded the six-figure mark in seasonal earnings for the second consecutive year, totaling \$127,990, and he currently sits on an active win-streak of 13.

Despite sending just 176 starters postward – one of his lowest totals in years – Hennessy's stable still compiled 46 wins, totaling \$475,191 in purses.

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	<b>176</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>\$475,191</b>	<b>0.323</b>

## JASON HUGHES

In 2023, PEI horseman Jason Hughes enjoyed a career season, not only on the driving side, but the training side as well.

On the training side, Hughes has amassed \$369,053 in earnings, which is easily a career-best. In addition to that, he has sent out 83 winners in 406 starts, and has a UTRS of 0.333.

The Stratford, PEI resident enjoyed similar success in the bike as well, totaling \$681,703 in purse earnings, which shattered his previous best of \$475,298 back in 2021. In 844 starts this past year Hughes found the winner's circle 161 times, and has been the epitome of consistency, totaling 434 on-the-board finishes.

Included in his many driving/training wins in 2023, Hughes dominated the August 28th race card at Charlottetown Driving Park, ending the night with six driving wins - four of which were horses he trained himself. Among his other marquee driving accomplishments this season, Hughes guided six-year-old pacer Bee Two Bee, who he also trained, to a record-tying mile on September 9th at Charlottetown Driving Park, as guided the veteran a 1:50.1 victory, which equalled the track record.

TRAINING	STARTS	1sts	2nds	3rds	Earnings	UTRS
	406	83	57	61	\$364,449	0.310

DRIVER	STARTS	1sts	2nds	3rds	Earnings	UDRS
	844	161	135	138	\$681,703	0.306