

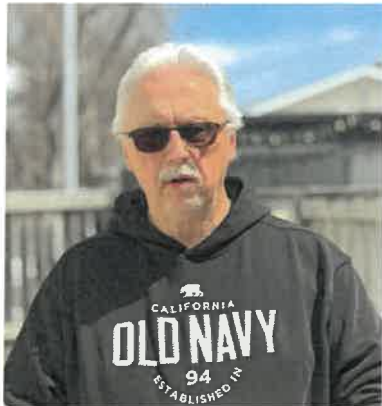
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DID YOU HEAR THE LATEST?

Stay up-to-date with the latest news from Assiniboia Downs.

ISSUE #182 - MAY 2, 2025



David Smook won his first ever Player's Choice Handicapping Tournament at ASD last Saturday. Congratulations!

Gut Feeling Guides Smook to First Ever Tournament Win at ASD

David Smook captured his first Player's Choice Handicapping Tournament title at ASD last Saturday, building his bankroll to an impressive \$125.00 to claim the trophy and \$1,000 prize money.

The key to his success was trusting his gut feeling on a first-time starter named Wind Speed in the 11th race at Santa Anita. "I just had one of those Ivan Bigg moments and went with my gut feeling," said Smook.

Wind Speed was 18-1.

CLICK HERE to read more about Smook's winning strategy.

151[™]

KENTUCKY DERBY

Kentucky Derby - Saturday, May 3

- ASD opens at 9:30 a.m. on Friday, May 2 & Saturday, May 3. The first race post time for Churchill is 10 a.m. for both days.
- Watch [ASD Live's Kentucky Derby Show](#) featuring Kirt & Stretch on our [YouTube Channel](#)
- Free Kentucky Derby Programs and DRF at all locations
- Draws for a Kentucky Derby merchandise package at all locations on Saturday
- Buy a RazDerby Lemonade at ASD on Saturday for \$9.95 and get a Kentucky Derby Mint Julep Glass.



Live Racing starts May 13

Live racing returns to Assiniboia Downs on Tuesday, May 13 at 7:30 p.m.! Enjoy the thrill of the races with free admission and parking, plus an exciting lineup of free family fun starting at 6:30 p.m. Bring the kids early for face painting, bouncy castles, and lively children's entertainment — it's the perfect way to kick off the live racing season!



Live Racing Prime Rib Buffet

Reservations are now open for our live racing Certified Angus Prime Rib Buffet featuring succulent, melt-in-your-mouth prime rib prepared to perfection, chicken, seafood table, rotating entree selections and much more! Buffet prices: Adults \$59.95, Seniors (65+) \$54.95, Kids 6 to 12 years old \$34.95, Kids 5 & under \$22.95.



Dale Hawerchuk



This is Dale's first year in professional hockey. He was born April 4, 1963 in Toronto. Dale's hobbies include all sports and horse racing at Assiniboia Downs. He spends his summers in Oshawa at his parent's and friend's cottages. Favorite restaurant is Paladar's in Winnipeg.

Click photo to enlarge

The Jets are Cookin'

The late Dale Hawerchuk's love for horse racing was as notable as his talent on the ice. In the off-season, the Hall of Fame center often spent time watching the races at Assiniboia Downs, balancing his passion for sports with time at the family cottage and enjoying local Winnipeg favourites.

While his on-ice legacy includes a Calder Trophy and over 100 points in his rookie season, Hawerchuk also embraced the community, contributing to The Jets Are Cookin', a 1981 fundraiser cookbook, with his signature "Monster Cookies." The article and some of the recipes appeared in the Winnipeg Free Press on Tuesday, April 29.

[CLICK HERE](#) for Dale's recipe and more.



- #1 Spot in Winnipeg for VLT Jackpots!
- Free Draw for \$200 Cash every Friday, Saturday & Sunday plus draws to Spin the Lucky Cash Wheel



[Click to enlarge photo](#)

A Snapshot in Time by Bob Gates

This week's Snapshot in Time comes courtesy of Gloria Hill Armstrong, widow of former Downs jockey George Richard "Dickie" Armstrong. Dick won four Downs leading rider titles (1962, '64, '65, and '67). He passed away on November 16, 2009.

Mrs. A, as I like to call her, explained that the photo was taken the night the Jocks' Guild honoured him for his service to the Association. Another former Downs rider, Tak Inouye, looks on during the presentation ceremonies.

Currently, Mrs. A is battling some health issues. Please join me in sending best wishes to her and her son Darryn as they face their ongoing challenges. (Armstrong family photo)



- \$11.95 Daily Lunch Special
- Happy Hour (3 to 5pm & 9pm to close)
- \$4 Spirit Hour (11 pm to midnight)
- Daily Evening Specials



Journalism has been made the 3-1 morning-line favourite for the 151st Kentucky Derby. (Benoit Photo)

[2025 Kentucky Derby Cheat Sheet](#) [Journalism Favoured Over 20 Rivals on Saturday](#)

The 151st Kentucky Derby takes place this Saturday at Churchill Downs, and everyone wants to know who the winner will be.

Nobody knows for sure, but morning-line favourite Journalism looks like the horse to beat. [America's Best Racing](#) has the scoop on all 20 horses, and there are definitely some live longshots!

[CLICK FOR FULL STORY](#)



- Wager on Top Tracks
- Simulcast Schedule
- Off-Track Betting Locations



Mandatory Payout Alerts:

- Gulfstream Park will have a mandatory payout of the Jackpot Pick 6 on Sunday, May 4. The current carryover is \$205,270.
- Turf Paradise will have mandatory payouts of the Jackpot Pick 6, on the closing day of their meet Saturday, May 3. The Pick 6 carryover going into Saturday is \$27,052.



Secretariat.com has been running Hall of Fame writer Steve Haskin's horse racing columns for years, and for good reason! Haskin spent decades in the backstretch learning his craft, and it shows!

Kentucky Derby 151 Handicapping Analysis **An In-Depth Handicapping Take On The Derby**

Steve Haskin has been picking Journalism from the very beginning at Secretariat.com, and he's not changing his mind, but this week he's going deep.

Haskin handicaps the world's most famous two minutes in sports, the 151st Kentucky Derby, for speed, class, pace, closers, longshots, and more.

Over 3,900 beautiful words and a [great read here](#).

~ [Secretariat.com](#)

CLICK FOR FULL STORY



Winnipeg Free Press Columnist Mike McIntyre won the 2024 Sovereign Award for Outstanding Writing. Congratulations Mike!

2024 Sovereign Award Winners **Free Press Columnist Wins For Outstanding Writing**

The Jockey Club of Canada hosted the 50th Annual Sovereign Awards on Thursday, April 24, in Woodbridge, Ontario, and local scribe Mike McIntyre was among the award winners. Mike won the Sovereign Award for Outstanding Writing.

Trainer Roger Attfield and jockey Emma-Jayne Wilson were presented with special Sovereign Awards, and Patches O'Houlihan was crowned Canada's Horse of the Year.

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Michael Olito

Michael Olito
(March 25, 1942 - April 25, 2025)

Longtime ASD supporter and horse owner Michael Thomas Olito passed away on April 25, 2025, at the age of 83 after a battle with Parkinson's disease.

He is lovingly remembered by his wife of 50 years, Verla; his sisters, Jennifer Olito and Margaret Smith (Robert); and many nieces and nephews. Born in England on March 25, 1942, Michael immigrated to Canada in 1945 with his mother and sister to join his father near MacGregor, Manitoba.

He grew up on a farm, attended school in MacGregor, and showed an early passion for art and sports. After graduating from high school, he attended Teacher's College, taught for a few years, then earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Manitoba.

Well known for his creative projects, Michael built a wooden helicopter that he "flew" from the Legislature to the Winnipeg Art Gallery, constructed a river ferry, and presented a solo show at the WAG.

Michael shared a deep love of horse racing with his wife Verla. Together they owned and trained numerous horses at Assiniboia Downs from 1979 to 2019 and won 38 races.

Our sincere condolences to Michael's family and many friends.



The Best of Bob by Bob Gates

From June 30, 2021: A Dashing Special Memory!

Believe it or not, the Downs' history blog is entering its 10th season of sharing racing stories from the past. From 2012 to the present, the Downs' historian has penned 180 tales from yesteryear. Click [here](#) to discover the history guy's fondest racing memory — he says it's one no one will see coming. You'd never guess this one. Not in a million years!

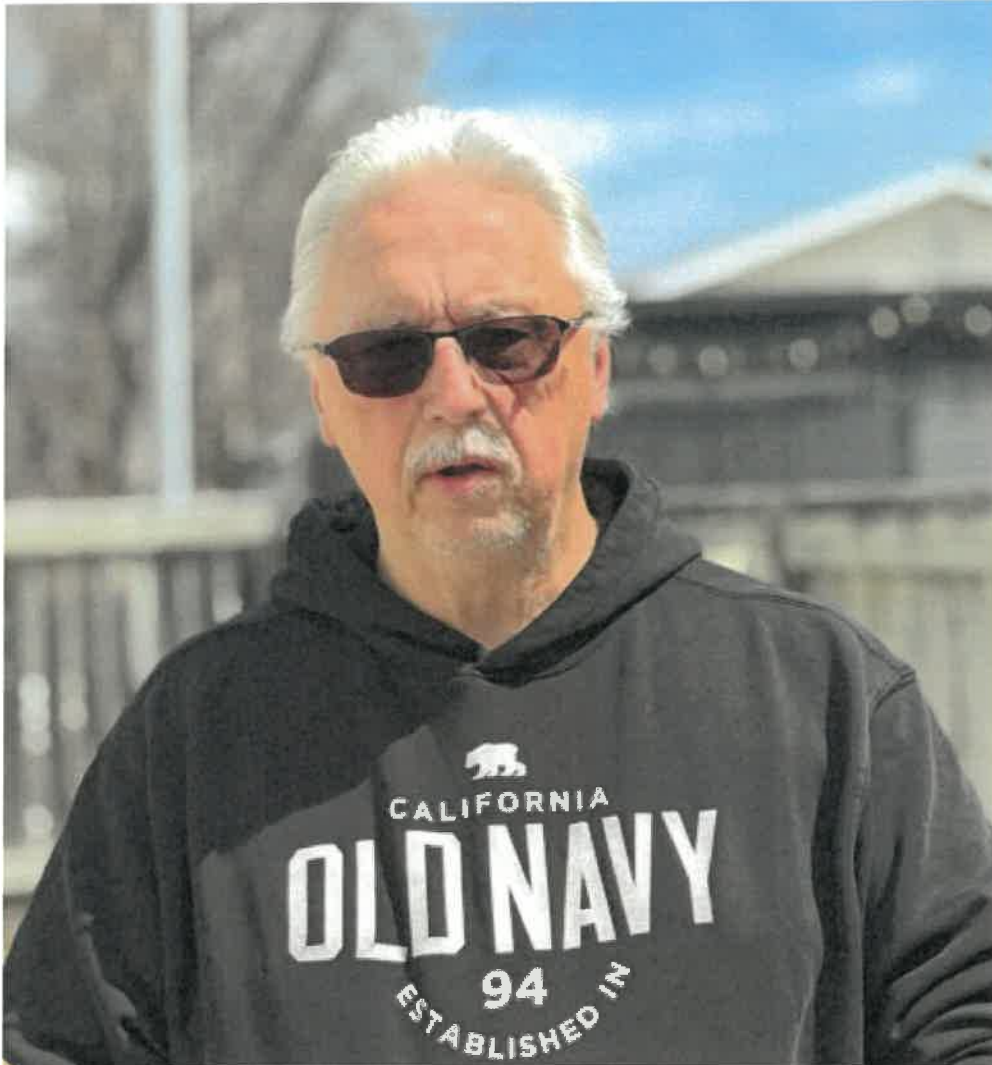
Feedback & Inside Track Archives

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

Did you know that past issues of The Inside Track are available on our website? Click [here](#) to read them now.

Gut Feeling Guides Smook to First Tournament Win at ASD

May 1, 2025 | The Inside Track



Player's Choice Tournament winner David Smook.

by G. S. Thompson

David Smook captured his first Player's Choice Handicapping Tournament title at Assiniboia Downs last Saturday, building his bankroll to an impressive \$125.00 to claim the trophy and \$1,000 prize money.

The 70-year-old retired Canada Post superintendent bested runner-up Ken Stewin (\$101.60) by a comfortable \$23.40 margin, with Ron Phelps (\$94.30), Cecelia Liebrecht (\$93.40), and Brandon Barter (\$90.90) rounding out the top five.

While Smook admitted he "was lucky on that one," his victory was anything but accidental. The key to his success was trusting his gut feeling on a first-time starter named Wind Speed in the 11th race at Santa Anita. The 18-1 shot had several factors in his favour — post position one, jockey Tyler Baze, and three scratched horses from the race.

"I just had one of those Ivan Bigg moments and went with my gut feeling," said Smook, referring to the late respected handicapper whose seminars Smook occasionally attended. Wind Speed paid \$38.80, \$14.20 \$9.80 across the board.

Smith had earlier hit with an 8-1 shot in the fifth race at Santa Anita named Fast Buck, ridden by former Woodbine leading rider Kazushi Kimura. Fast Buck returned \$18.20, \$6.80, \$3.60 across the board and set Smook up with a payoff to build on.

When asked about his handicapping methodology, Smook cited consistency as a primary factor. "I go through the program, I go through the Equibase database, and I look at the form," said Smook. "Are they consistent in doing this, are they consistent in doing that?"

He also checks BRISnet.com for additional information and relies heavily on his intuition. "I use my gut feelings a lot for some of these races. You can't ignore it. If I do and I change my mind or something, it usually costs me." Smook also pays close attention to jockeys. "If you have a big jockey on there, they can sometimes pull it off for you."

The retired superintendent has been competing in handicapping contests for several years, but this marks his first victory. "Once or twice," he said about previous close calls. "But I never put the work in, you know, it was just more of 'we'll have fun.'"

Smook's handicapping skills are mostly self-taught, but he expanded his knowledge through Brad Free's highly regarded handicapping book *Handicapping 101: A Horse Racing Primer*, which he carries "like a Bible." He said he also benefited from the late Ivan Bigg's insights through seminars and newsletter articles.

One key lesson Smook gleaned from these experts: "Horses are just like human athletes. They have their off days. But whether it's 17 to 1 or 40 to 1, sometimes two races back they might have shown something and they can find it again."

What does Smook enjoy most about handicapping? "The challenge," he said. "It's not simple to do. You really have to do your homework if you want to get ahead." But he finds the mental exercise enjoyable. "You couldn't ask for anything more stimulating. I mean, you know, you've got the math in there. They've got the way they do their speed, the pace, all of that. It's amazing."

Smook's horse racing background extends beyond handicapping. In 1987, he co-owned a gelding named Auto Rotate that ran at Assiniboia Downs. Though he hasn't owned horses since then due to family and career responsibilities, his passion for the sport remains. He's looking forward to both the Kentucky Derby this Saturday, and the upcoming live race meeting at the Downs. His favourite longshot pick for the Kentucky Derby? Citizen Bull.



David Smook likes Citizen Bull as a longshot in the Kentucky Derby. (Barbara D. Livingston / DRF)

Smook is a staunch supporter of Assiniboia Downs, which he describes with genuine enthusiasm: "We are very, very lucky to have Assiniboia Downs. It's a great track. It's high quality. And the people are great. It's amazing, you know, it really is. I love it."

"I'd also like to give credit to Sheri Glendinning," said Smook. "That lady does a lot of work. And she's already sent out the stuff for the Kentucky Oaks on Friday and the Kentucky Derby on Saturday."

Smook already has his reservations for opening night on Tuesday, May 13 in the Terrace Dining Room, and considers the local racing community fortunate to have such a facility.

When asked how it felt to win for the first time, Smook described the suspense of checking his phone repeatedly: "When I saw my name, I just... well, I screamed quite loud." His wife Roberta was equally pleased, telling him "you deserve it for trying all the time."

As for his prize money, Smook plans to keep it in his account for now. "My goal is to spend the least amount of money, and win the most."

"That makes me happy."