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ISSUE #214 - DECEMBER 12, 2025



Donna Johnston (left) with sisters Marion and Linda (right) and their horse Wire Me the Money in the Assiniboia Downs backstretch. (Mikaela MacKenzie / Winnipeg Free Press)

Remembering Donna Johnston

Longtime trainer Donna Johnston passed away last Saturday, December 6, at the age of 79.

Donna was a fixture in Barn C over the past few years at the Downs, and it was always a pleasure to stop by and say hi to her in the mornings. Donna had trained a few horses at the Downs since 1976, compiling a record of 103-130-130 from 861 starts, with her best horse being a big, tough Manitoba-bred named Arikana.

Our sincere condolences.

[Full story here.](#)



Open daily from 10 a.m. to 1 a.m.

The fun never stops at Assiniboia Downs **Winnipeg's place to play and win!**

Did you know that Assiniboia Downs is Winnipeg's #1 Spot for VLT Jackpots? Play any of our 140 VLTs in the Club West Gaming Lounge for your chance to win!

🎄 Join us for the 12 Days of Christmas from Saturday, Dec. 13 to Wednesday, Dec. 24. Complimentary snacks and free draws to pick an ornament off the Christmas Tree for a chance to win \$100 cash!

🎁 Free Spin to Win draws — Friday, Saturday and Sunday starting at 6 p.m.

💰 Free \$200 cash draws — Friday, Saturday and Sunday at 9 p.m.

Click [here](#) to see our recent jackpots.



Travers Cummings

NFL Picks by TravyFootball **Week 15**

Sunday brings some must-watch matchups: Bengals-Ravens in a huge AFC North showdown where one team's star QB has lost his edge while the other is playing dangerous spoiler ball, Bills traveling to face the red-hot Patriots on a 10-game streak with Josh Allen looking like an MVP and the division title on the line, and Seahawks-Colts where Indianapolis is so decimated by injuries they called Philip Rivers out of retirement. I've got my picks locked in—see them [here](#).



Brody's Streak and jockey Rachaad Knights return to the winner's circle after an early spring win at ASD for trainer Tom Gardipy, Jr. Click image for full size. (Jason Halstead / Assiniboia Photo)

Looking for a Special Photo?

Track Photographer Jason Halstead may have just what you're looking for

Looking for that extra-special photo of your big horse, one you might not find in your win pictures?

Track photographer Jason Halstead takes numerous photos during the races, and not all of them can make it into the win photos. If you're looking for something frameable from your big race, or of your special horse, email Jason at jjhphoto@gmail.com.

Prices are excellent! Almost as good as his photos 😊



A Snapshot in Time by Bob Gates

Our second seasonal memory is the roan mare Snow Tamed. In January 1978 a snowstorm played havoc with Lexington, Kentucky sale. Corinne Jacobson purchased the filly privately, after she was bought back by the owner. On May 25, 1979 Snow Tamed started the season firing on all cylinders, chalking-up one of her four career victories. (Gerry Hart Photo)

[Click photo to enlarge](#)



- \$13.95 Daily Lunch Special
- Happy Hour (3 to 5pm & 8pm to close)
- Daily Evening Specials
- Details at ASDowns.com



[Oaklawn Park Confidential: Track Trends, Top Trainers and Jockeys to Help Win at Upcoming Meet](#)

Some of the winter season's best dirt racing is coming to the Midwest with the start of Oaklawn Park's 2025-26 meet on Friday, Dec. 12. Racing at Oaklawn boasts big fields, good betting races for handicappers, an excellent stakes program, and very strong purses throughout its 64-day season that will continue until May 2. Handicapper Noel Michaels offers insights on track trends, trainers, jockeys, preferred posts, and running styles.

Horses leave the gate at Oaklawn Park, which kicks off its winter meeting on Friday, Dec. 12. (Eclipses Sportswire)

-- [America's Best Racing](#)

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MANDATORY PAYOUT: Woodbine will be having a mandatory payout of their Super Hi-5 on Saturday, December 13. The current carryover is \$269,656.



[La Prevoyante Stakes Saturday: Clair Must Be Caught](#)

A CTHS Ontario yearling sale success story, Hurricane Clair could prove tough to beat in the restricted \$100,000 La Prevoyante Stakes on Saturday at Woodbine, as she attempts to wrap up her four-year-old campaign with a third stakes victory.

Sahin Civaci guides Hurricane Clair to victory in the \$250,000 Wonder Where Stakes. (Woodbine / Michael Burns Photo)

The La Prevoyante marks a significant drop in class as it is restricted to Ontario-sired fillies and mares, and former ASD trainer Martin Drexler has taken the blinkers off for this race. All systems go.

-- [Canadian Thoroughbred](#)

[CLICK FOR FULL STORY](#)



The Best of Bob

This week Bob's blog takes a Dickensian-like look at the date May 3rd and the 16-year span from 1969 to 1985. For one of the Downs perennial leading riders, it was the best of times, and it was the worst of times. Cryptic enough for you?

Click [here](#) and all will be explained. (From May 23, 2019)

Track Historian Bob Gates

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.



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Remembering Donna Johnston

Dec 11, 2025 | Live Racing, The Inside Track



*Donna Johnston (left) with sisters Marion and Linda (right) and their horse Wire Me the Money in the Assiniboia Downs backstretch.
(Mikaela MacKenzie / Winnipeg Free Press)*

By G.S. Thompson

Remembering Donna Johnston

Longtime Assiniboia Downs trainer Donna Johnston passed away last Saturday, December 6, at the age of 79.

Donna was a fixture in Barn C over the past few years at the Downs, and it was always a pleasure to stop by and say hi to her in the mornings. Donna had trained a few horses at the Downs since 1976, compiling a record of 103-130-130 from 861 starts, with her best horse being a big, tough Manitoba-bred named Arikana.

A son of Gala Double, Arikana won the 1984 Manitoba Stakes, the 1985 Manitoba Maturity, and the Ivan Dowler Memorial twice (1984, 1985). He also finished second in the Osiris Plate, the Harry Jeffrey Handicap, the Agassiz Handicap, and the R.J. Speers Handicap, retiring in 1987 with a record of 13-8-5 from 51 starts and earnings of US\$112,134.

Born in 1946 in Solsgirth, Manitoba, Donna grew up on the family farm alongside her sisters Marion, Linda, and Marlene. Like many rural Manitoba kids of that era, the Johnston girls made the trek to school in a horse-drawn sled during the winter months, an experience that no doubt contributed to Donna's lifelong connection with horses.

After finishing school, Donna pursued her passion for horses by taking a horse master's course in Maryland. Upon returning to Manitoba, she taught riding to a few students before finding work with Dr. Anderson and Dr. Elder, caring for horses on their farm, but eventually, the pull of the racetrack proved too strong to resist. Donna worked briefly for Dr. Elder at Assiniboia Downs before striking out on her own as a trainer.

"She was very dedicated," said son Julian, whose daughter Ashley gave Donna four great-grandchildren. "You never had to motivate her to get up and get going. When it had anything to do with the horses and the track, she was trying to motivate everyone else. She loved it."

That passion for the game remained strong even in recent years. Just a few years ago, Donna was still buying racehorses and bringing them up from the United States. "She did her research," said Julian. "She saw potential in horses that other people didn't. She'd bring that horse up to a different climate and atmosphere and track conditions, and the horse would do amazingly well."

Donna also worked in the race office doing entries for a couple of years, contributing to the Downs' operations in yet another way.

Beyond the track, Donna was a devoted mother to her daughter Jade, who now lives in Australia with her two sons. Despite the distance, Donna maintained close contact with her daughter and grandchildren, even travelling to Australia to visit when her first grandson was born.

The Johnston sisters, Marion, Linda, and Donna, made quite a team over the years at Assiniboia Downs. In August 2020, the Winnipeg Free Press featured a story about [The Fightin' Johnston Sisters](#), with a photo showing the three sisters giving their horse Wire Me the Money a bath, a snapshot of a family bound together by their love of horses, even if they sometimes squabbled along the way.

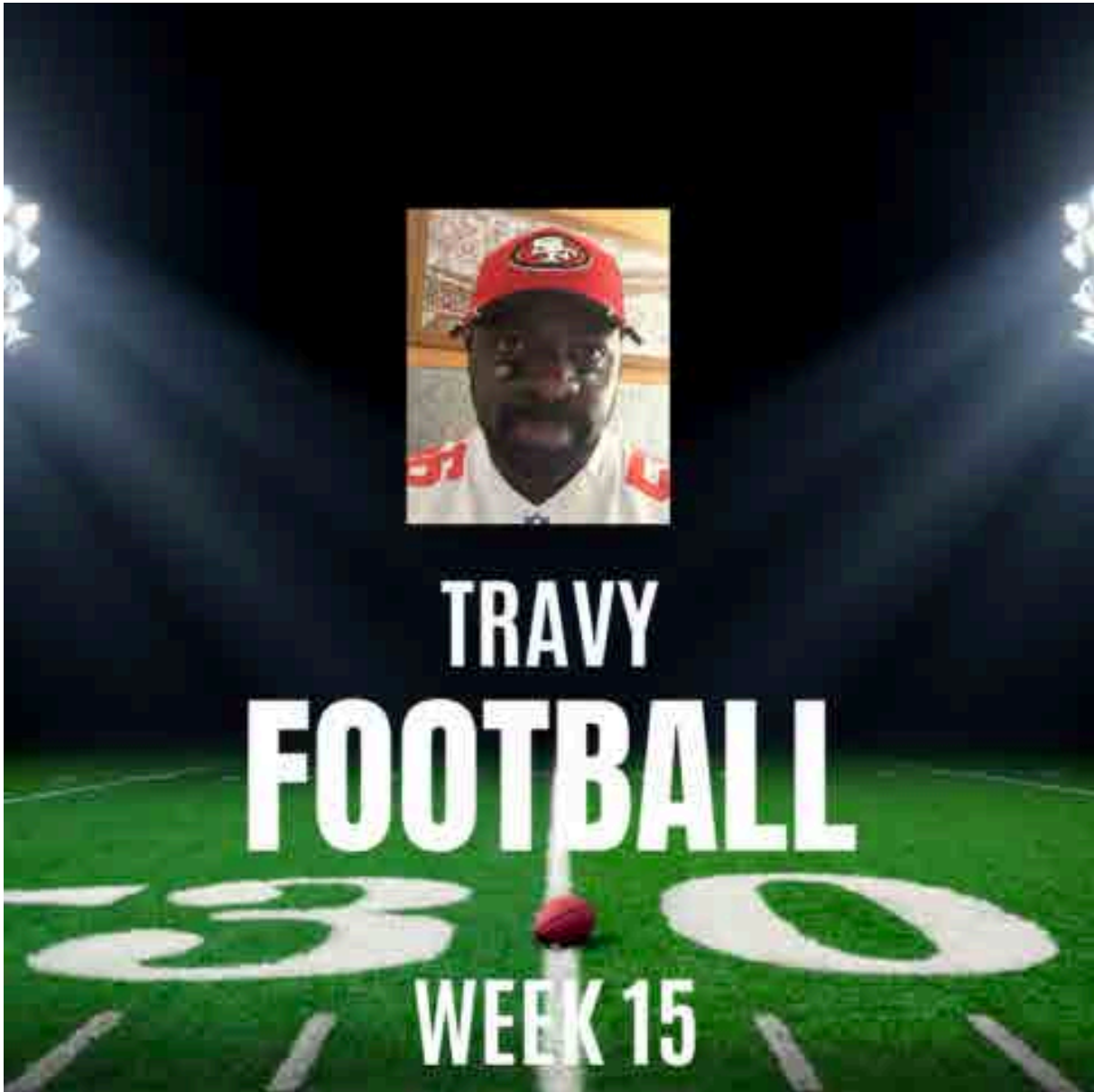
Donna will be remembered by the backstretch community at Assiniboia Downs as someone who truly loved the game. Whether she was watching her horses train, researching pedigrees, or simply caring for her charges in the morning, Donna brought dedication and passion to everything she did.

Our sincere condolences.

A celebration of life for Donna Johnston will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, December 13 at Assiniboia Downs.

TravyFootball Week 15

Dec 10, 2025 | The Inside Track



By Travers Cummings

Bengals over Ravens (Sunday noon): I have officially washed my hands of the Baltimore Ravens, and more specifically, Lamar Jackson. I don't know if he's more hurt than the team wants to say, but he just doesn't have any of the explosiveness he once possessed that made him one of the most feared quarterbacks in the league. Losing to their division rival Pittsburgh Steelers last week hurts, but it also dealt a blow to their playoff aspirations. A

date with the Bengals is up next, and what was once an easy win is now going to be a tough matchup. Joe Burrow has brought a spark back to Cincinnati's offense as they went toe to toe with Buffalo last week in the snow. A couple of turnovers at the end cost them the game, but they were right in it up to that point. The Bengals won't be seeing the postseason unless they can somehow run the table and have the Steelers and Ravens lose the rest of the way, but they sure as heck can play spoilers.

Bills over Patriots (Sunday noon): After winning a game filled with snow, the Bills will travel to New England to take on the Patriots where the weather may factor in once again. Josh Allen put on his one-man show against the Bengals and stated his claim to being the best player in the NFL, period. Totalling four touchdowns (three in the air, one on the ground), Cincinnati's defense had no answer for him as he pretty much did whatever he wanted. The Bills are still two games behind the Patriots, so the division title is still in reach, but they'll have to win this matchup seeing how they lost the earlier meeting between them in Week 5. The Pats are coming in fresh off their late-season bye week and will look to extend the 10-game winning streak they're riding.

Seahawks over Colts (Sunday afternoon): Well, this HAD potential to be an excellent game, but then the inevitable happened with Daniel Jones (sorry Derek). I don't know how many people out there have suffered any sort of leg injury, but usually what happens is you start overcompensating with your good leg to take pressure off of your bad leg. So, then you end up with a bad leg on one side, and an overused leg on the other side, and that's exactly what happened to Daniel Jones. He was already trying to play through a broken fibula, which I don't understand how that was even possible, but overcompensating on his "good" leg caused him to blow out his Achilles tendon. So now he has two bad legs, and the Colts have zero good quarterbacks left. They're getting so desperate that they put out the bat signal and asked 44-year-old Philip Rivers to come out of retirement to try and salvage their season. Rookie quarterback Riley Leonard, who's nursing a strained knee ligament of his own, will probably get his first career start, but it's going to be a tough task for him going into Seattle and playing against their defense.

Last week: 0-3

Season overall: 27-15