



PRESS RELEASE - AJAX DOWNS

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Country Boy 123 battles to Picov Memorial Championship victory

AJAX DOWNS, OCTOBER 8, 2018 - In his toughest test of the season, COUNTRY BOY 123 fended off a stubborn Albertt to win the \$84,400 Alex Picov Memorial Championship on Oct. 8 to complete a magical seven-for-seven season at Ajax Downs.

A large Thanksgiving Monday crowd applauded the 5-year-old Quarter Horse owned and trained by Ruth Barbour as he returned to the winner's circle with Innisfil's Cory Spataro on board. Bet down as the 1 to 5 favourite, Country Boy 123 won the 440-yard race by half a length over a deep, muddy track with Scott Reid's Ontario-bred Albertt, under Cassandra Jeschke, holding second over Country's Comin Bac.

"It was a bit of a greasy track and he was having a hard time skipping over that," said Spataro, Ajax Downs' leading rider. "Albertt and Cassandra had me sweating there for a little while. I thought for a second we might meet our doom today but he's an incredible horse, really smart horse who knows where the wire is."

Country Boy 123, bred in Michigan by Carolyn Bay and purchased as a yearling for \$7,200 (US) at the Heritage Place September sale in Oklahoma, is the first horse to win consecutive Picov Championships since Fast Flung Floyd in 2008/2009. His career earnings stand at over \$330,000.

The Horse of the Year in 2016 and 2017 and most likely again this year, currently leads all North American Quarter Horses by wins in 2018.

It was the 18th career win for Country Boy 123 from 26 races and his final start at Ajax for the 2018 season. Barbour said the big dark bay could make one more start this year in the \$75,000 (US) Indiana Championship on Oct. 27 at Indiana Downs.

"There is just so much luck involved [in this sport]," said Barbour. "The distance of 440 yards is not really his happy place but when he broke so well from the gate I knew he was happy."

Also on the holiday Monday day of racing, SPY FOR THE SENATE won the \$99,700 Alex Picov Futurity for 2-year-olds with a last-to-first rush for owner Milena Kwiecien of Burlington and trainer Jason Pascoe of Pontypool.

It was the third win in seven starts for Spy for the Senate who was purchased privately by Kwiecien after the colt was bought back from a 2017 Oklahoma sale for \$6,000.

"I wasn't planning on buying him but as soon as I saw him in the ring, I fell in love with him," said Kwiecien. "Plus he was born on my birthday (Feb. 12)."

Kwiecien's Stripper Dust finished second in the Futurity with Ontario-bred Shes Sizzling finishing third.

Pascoe has sent out 34 winners at Ajax this season, his best career total with two days remaining in the season. Kwiecien, who is only in her fifth year racing Quarter Horses, has 20 wins, a career best and second only to perennial leading owner Christine Tavares.

Wagering on this year's Thanksgiving day Monday was up a whopping \$110,000 up 110% from the same racing day last year and the third time this season that wagering has been in six-digits (compared to one last season).

Racing continues next Monday, Oct. 15 with the Picov Derby for the top 3-year-olds in the province including Had to Be Ivory, whose only loss in his career came at the hands of Country Boy 123. Fans wearing a "Talk Derby to Me" Ajax Downs t-shirt on track Monday will receive a betting voucher.

For more, please visit ajaxdowns.com.

(Photo RUTH BARBOUR holds her pride and joy, COUNTRY BOY 123 in the winner's circle. Barbour has a number of family members and friends in attendance. Cory Spataro pats his hero. - New Image Media Photo)

(second Photo - SPY FOR THE SENATE surges to victory in the Alex Picov Memorial Futurity - JOHN WATKINS PHOTO)



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