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## PRESS RELEASE - AJAX DOWNS

### Had to Be Ivory Named Ajax Downs 2022 Horse of the Year



*Had to Be Ivory won all six of his starts in 2022, three stakes races, and the Distance Series. Clive Cohen photos*

**AJAX, FEBRUARY 19, 2023 - Carol and Jaime Robertson's Ontario homebred HAD TO BE IVORY** was named the 2022 Quarter Horse of the Year at the Quarter Racing Owners of Ontario and Ajax Downs awards banquet at the Ajax Convention Centre on Saturday, February 18. This was the first in-person awards ceremony for the Quarter Horse community since 2019.

A moment of silence was observed before the event in honour of **Norman Picov** who passed away at the age of 87 earlier in the day. Mr. Picov was responsible for the building of Ajax Downs and furthering the growth of the Ontario Quarter Horse industry, following in the steps of his father Alex who founded Picov Downs in 1969.

Had to be Ivory, a son of Ivory James, was winning his second Horse of the Year title, having been voted by the 2019 overall champion by the QROOI board of directors. In 2022, the Ontario-bred 7-year-old, owned and bred by Carol and Jaime Robertson of Hillsburgh, ON, won all six of his starts including the Alex Picov Memorial Championship, Picov Maturity, and Ontario Bred Maturity. Trained by Bryn Robertson, the big bay gelding also won the Distance Series which included a track-record setting score at 440-yards of 21.41 earning him a whopping 112 speed index.

The Robertson family dedicated Had to Be Ivory's Horse of the Year title to his dam Had to Be Fandango, who passed away the day before the awards. Had to Be Ivory is expected to race again in 2023.



Divisional awards were presented to horses and horsepeople that accrued the most QROOI Awards Program points based on top four placings in various levels of races throughout the racing season.

For the fourth consecutive year, **JASON PASCOE** of Pontypool, was the **High Point Trainer of the Year** with an impressive 528 points. Pascoe led all trainers with 44 wins and purse earnings of over \$697,000. Pascoe's main client, **MILENA KWIECIEN** of Burlington, was the High Point Owner with 288 points, and led all owners with 17 victories. Kwiecien raced the top 3-year-old filly, **EYE LIVE FOR CANDY**, co-champion 2-year-old filly **VALIANT CHICK INSNOW**, and Sprint Series winner **CARNEROS**.

**TONY 'TP' PHILLIPS** won a tight race for leading jockey with 262 points (25 wins), edging **RAMIRO CASTILLO** and **BRIAN BELL** who tied for runner-up riders with 247 points. It was Phillips' second jockey title.

**CHRISTINE TAVARES** won her sixth High Point Breeder award in the last nine years with 10 winners and 152 points.

John Wilson and Scott Reid's **NIGHT LEADER** was the year's top 3-year-old male as the Ontario bred gelding had 35 points from four wins in six races including the Ontario Sired Derby. A full list of winners is below.

The 2023 Quarter Horse season at Ajax Downs is scheduled to begin on **Wednesday May 10**. Visit [www.ajaxdowns.com](http://www.ajaxdowns.com) for the complete schedule and all news. You can also follow Ajax Downs on social media @AjaxDowns on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.



*Had to Be Ivory's team includes Bryn and Carol Robertson (far right) and Zac Kennedy and Paul Sauve. Presenting is QROOI president Bob Broadstock.*



## **OROOI / AJAX DOWNS AWARDS 2022**

Horse of the Year - Had to Be Ivory  
2-year-old filly - First Prize Charlotte/Valliant Chick Insnow (tie)  
2-year-old colt or gelding - Shades of Cold  
3-year-old colt or gelding - Night Leader  
3-year-old filly - Eye Live for Candy  
Aged Male - Had to Be Ivory  
Aged Mare - Fly Belle Cartel  
Distance series Champion - Had to Be Ivory  
Sprint series Champion - Carneros  
High Point Jockey - Tony Phillips  
High Point Trainer- Jason Pascoe  
High Point Owner -Milena Kwiecien  
High Point Owner/Trainer - Bryn Roberston  
High Point Breeder - Christine Tavares