

SPORTS

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Tough day for hometown cowboy at rodeo



GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

RIDE 'EM COWBOY: Mark McNutt can't quite nail the pitch in Sunday's steer wrestling competition.

Misses his shot in steer wrestling, but wife shows strongly in barrel racing

By Steve LeBlanc
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

It wasn't quite the way Mark McNutt had hoped to be introduced to his soon-to-be fellow Miltonians.

With timing taking a major hit this past weekend at Country Heritage Park, the seasoned cowboy and most of his steer wrestling competitors missed the pitch during Milton's debut on the 10-stop Dodge Rodeo Tour.

"I'd expected about 10 more feet for my shot to come," he said moments after Sunday afternoon's appearance, in front of roughly 600 spectators. "That's the way it goes — one day it works out and the next day it doesn't. You can't win every time. It's disappointing, sure, but that's part of the game. It's not like going to Las Vegas and losing. There's always another weekend."

Having recently bought a home in town with wife and fellow tour participant Joanne Fisher — and slated to move in shortly — McNutt has been the tour's reserve champion (second-place finisher) four of the last six years and had placed in the money (top five) just one weekend earlier in Milverton.

This time around he watched as

Petrolia's Bob McCormick rode his old horse, Murphy, to top honours — doing so in an impressive 8.47 seconds amidst overcast skies and a light drizzle.

Fisher solid in barrel racing

Faring much better this past weekend, Fisher and nine-year-old quarter-horse Chewy raced to a fourth-place finish in Saturday's barrel racing — stopping the clock at 15.6s. That would have been enough for first in the next day's 10-competitor field.

"Given the conditions, I'd say I did pretty well," she noted, referring to the ring's muddy footing following heavy early-morning showers.

Now pulling double duty, Fisher is in the midst of her first season serving as hubby's hazer — which for those unfamiliar with the sport is the mounted cowboy (or girl) who rides along the right-hand side of the steer to keep it running straight for the wrestler.

"Joanne did a great job today. There wasn't any problem on her end," said McNutt.

While Country Heritage Park didn't exactly draw the type of crowd the tour sees in other established centres like Milverton, the couple felt the turnout was great — considering the weather and it being the first year in Milton.

And the hundreds of area residents who made it out certainly have an ice-breaker should they meet the rodeo duo later this summer.

"Yeah a lot of people are surprised at first to hear about it. They're like, 'You do what?'" quipped Fisher. "This is just something we do on the weekends. It's like our summer family."

Sponsored by the Optimist Club and the *Champion* — among others — the weekend rodeo also featured bull riding and roping.

O'Shea moves into second on CFL's all-time DT list



Mike O'Shea

Not surprisingly, Mike O'Shea was quick to downplay his latest move up the CFL's all-time rankings.

That jump came in season-opening play Friday night, when in front of 26,155 fans at Winnipeg's Canad Inns Stadium he moved past Alondra Johnson for second in career defensive tackles with his 1,085th — delivered in the second quarter.

Like he has on a number of previous occasions, Milton's 37-year-old

linebacker maintained that his individual numbers are about longevity and not anything to get hung up on.

The Argos' stalwart was likely more focused on his team's overall strong defensive showing, that helped overshadow a short-circuiting offence and powered Toronto to a 23-16 decision over the Blue Bombers.

The win was a payback of sorts for last year's loss to Winnipeg in the East finals.

The six-foot-three-inch, 224-pounder would highlight Friday's efforts with a big fourth-quarter sack of Bombers quarterback Kevin Glenn, who was picked off three times by the Argos' secondary.

A five-time East Division all-star and three-time Grey Cup champion (1996, '97 and '04), O'Shea is now in his 16th season in the CFL — with most of that time spent with the Boatmen.



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