Gingras Makes Some Tough Crown Choices

Driver Yannick Gingras is having a career year, with the 35 year old amassing purse earnings of $15 million, a number that includes 36 victories in races with a purse of $100,000 or more. But as in anything, success doesn’t come without a price. And for Gingras, the Breeders Crown championship series means some tough decisions on who to drive.

“I know they are talking about Horse of the Year, but I’m not worried about awards. I’m worried about winning races.”

– Yannick Gingras on driving Sassa Hanover instead of the undefeated JK She’salady

“That was my decision. I think they are the two best fillies, I just like the versatility of Sassa Hanover, especially going into next year,” Gingras explained to HarnessRacing Weekend Preview. “She can do whatever I want her to do. I think the two fillies are much closer than what people believe they are, and when it’s that close, I decided to stick with Ronnie.”

Gingras said he understands those questioning his decision to remove himself from JK She'salady who, if she wins her elim and final, could become the first 2-year-old filly pacer to ever be voted Horse of the Year.

“This is no knock against JK She’salady. This is a choice I had to make and I’m very comfortable with my decision,” he said. “They are two great fillies and I know they are talking about Horse of the Year, but I’m not worried about awards. I’m worried about winning races.

“This week and all of next year, I like Sassa Hanover better than JK She’salady. She’s a world-record holder herself. It’s not like I picked off for a bad horse. She’s not too far off of being an unbeaten filly herself.”

Being the number-one call for both trainer Jimmy Takter and Burke, Gingras knew he would have other decisions to make. He said having great relationships with both conditioners has been a blessing.

“I’ll take it as I’d rather be in this situation having to make tough picks than not having picks to make,” said Gingras, who has seven Breeders Crown championships on his resume, including three last year. “The relationship I have with both Jimmy and Ronnie, they both understand that there is only so much I can do. If it wasn’t like that, this wouldn’t be possible, that’s for sure.”

Another choice Gingras had to make came in Saturday night’s 2-Year-Old Colt Trot elims as the Burke-trained Habitat drew in against the Takter-trained Pinkman. While Gingras has driven Habitat to six of his seven victories, including the $351,000 William Wellwood Memorial at Mohawk and last time out in the $237,500 Matron at Dover Downs, he went with Pinkman, whose four wins include the 2014 Driver of the Year award.
$463,690 Valley Victory at Woodbine. Interestingly, Sylvain Filion directed Pinkman that night, with the Gingras-driven Habitat finishing third.

“I just think Pinkman is peaking at the right time,” said Gingras. “He really was no good early on, but they castigated him and it really helped. He’s turned the corner. Every time I’ve sat behind him he’s gotten better and better. He qualified absolutely amazing the other day (a 6 ¾-length win in 1:55.1 on Nov. 7 at the Meadowlands). The track wasn’t fast, the wind was hard in the stretch, and he qualified in 1:55 like it was a walk in the park. He had plenty left.

“Habitat has done nothing wrong. He was sick in the Valley Victory, and the other times he lost he made breaks. He’s a very good horse and this was a tough choice, no doubt about it.”

Gingras said one decision he will have to make was delayed until next week’s final as his 2-year-old filly trotters Mission Brief (trained by Burke) and Wild Honey (trained by Takter) drew into separate elimins on Friday night.

“Thankfully, I get another week there,” said Gingras. “Mission Brief has some little quirks but she’s amazingly fast, while Wild Honey is not quite as fast, but she’s so handy it makes her a really good horse too.” — By Gordon Waterstone

“Just think Pinkman is peaking at the right time.”

– Yannick Gingras
Three Supplements To 3-Year-Old Filly Pace Spice Things Up

Six horses were supplemented to this year’s Breeders Crown events at the Meadowlands, including the 3-year-old colt pacer Always B Miki, the older mare pacers Yagonnakissmeornot (a half-sister to Always B Miki) and Venus Delight, and the 3-year-old filly pacers Sayitall BB, Color’s A Virgin and Weeper.

While the two older mare pacers are part of an 11-horse field that will go directly to the $281,250 final on Friday, Nov. 21, Always B Miki drew post 4 in the first of two eliminations on Saturday night, with the top five finishers in each of the elims advancing to the $531,250 final on Saturday, Nov. 22. The elim winners will get an advantage as they will be able to draw for posts 1 through 5 for the finals.

The trio of sophomore filly pacers will be in action on Friday night in a pair of eliminations, with Sayitall BB starting from post 2 in the first elim and Color’s A Virgin and Weeper starting respectively from post 2 and 7 in the second elim. Again, the top five finishers in each elimination will return for the $593,750 final on Saturday, Nov. 22.

While Color’s A Virgin’s breeder-owner Bruce Trogdon made it known well in advance that he planned on paying the $62,500 supplemental fee for his filly, whose current six-race win streak includes the Jugette, Indiana Sires Stakes Super Final and the Nadia Lobell (her most recent start on Oct. 31 at Hoosier Park), the same can’t be said for Weeper, who was bred by Joe and JoAnn Thompson’s Winbak Farm and races under the ownership of the farm’s Bay Pond Racing.

It wasn’t expected that Weeper would enter the Breeders Crown, but trainer Kelly O’Donnell said the filly’s 1:51 victory in the $179,200 Matron on Nov. 6 at Dover Downs tipped the scale for the Pennsylvania Sires Stakes champion.

“It was just the way she raced at Dover,” explained O’Donnell.

“She raced pretty big. It was raining and she left from the five hole in a quarter of :25.4, and she ended up in a two-hole trip. Around the last turn Pierce (driver Ron Pierce) was running right over the top of Act Now. As soon as he got to the passing lane she went down there and she exploded.

“She’s been racing good, but that race, she was really good,” he added with emphasis.
Color’s A Virgin and Weeper are one-two on the divisional earnings leaderboard this year with $472,622 and $424,561, respectively, while Uffizi Hanover, last year’s Breeders Crown champion who drew into the same elim from post 3, is third with $383,162. This will be just the second-ever match-up between Color’s A Virgin and Weeper, with the former winning and the latter third in the $176,500 Nadia Lobell.

“My filly wasn’t eligible to the Jugette or to Lexington, so we’ve only raced against her once,” said O’Donnell. “In the Nadia Lobell, it was a really miserable night. The winds were blowing 45 miles an hour and it rained all day and then turned to snow. We got shuffled back to eighth at the top of the stretch but she came back and finished third.”

Weeper will be driven by Pierce again. O’Donnell said he isn’t concerned that Weeper will be starting from post 7 in her elim.

“At the Meadowlands it’s not that big of a deal, especially the way she can leave,” he said.

If Weeper advances from the elims and then wins the final, it would give the 56-year-old O’Donnell just his second Breeders Crown trophy. His lone title came back in 1985 when Buddy Gilmour drove Stienam to a victory in the 3-Year-Old Filly Pace at Northlands Park in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

“Everybody gives me hell when I have one in the Breeders Crown saying, ‘Hey, he’s only won one and it’s been since 1985.’ I’d like to tell them that a lot of people have never won one. They’re not easy to win,” O’Donnell said with a laugh.—

Gordon Waterstone

Your So Vain Back, Making Just Fourth Start Of Season

With four horses taking byes—Commander Crowe, Creative, Intimidate and Market Share—only six of the 10 horses starting in the elimination for the Breeders Crown Open Trot will advance to the final.

One of those vying for a berth in the final is Your So Vain, who earlier this season pulled off a big victory in the Hambletonian Maturity. Trained by Ake Svanstedt, You So Vain will be making only his fourth start of the season in the Breeders Crown elimination, Race 10 on the Saturday card at the Meadowlands. His last purse race before the Crown elim was the Cashman Memorial on Aug. 2—Hambletonian Day—when he broke stride and finished ninth.

“He has had soundness issues,” said Svanstedt Stable assistant Bjorn “Bernie” Noren about the three-month layoff. “It took time to get him back. He had a problem with a leg behind. He had raced first-over (in the Cashman elimination, finishing fourth) and then he had trouble.”

The question looming about Your So Vain after such a long layoff is whether or not his single qualifier one week before the Crown elimination will be enough for him to handle the tough older foes he’ll be facing. In the qualifier on Nov. 7 at the Meadowlands, he finished second—beaten four lengths by Master Of Law—in 1:56, trotting his own mile in 1:56.4 with Svanstedt in the sulky.

“He (Svanstedt) had a ton of horse left,” said Noren. “He could have went right on by. He’s a good horse. He’s going to develop into a very, very good free-for-all.”

For those who wonder how good Your So Vain is off of just one qualifier, keep in mind that the Hambletonian Maturity was his first purse race of 2014, and it came off of a single qualifier two weeks prior. In that qualifier, however, You So Vain turned in an eye-popping 1:53.3 effort.

One thing Your So Vain has going for him in the Crown elim is that he’ll start from post 2 in the field of 10.

The morning line favorite for this Crown elimination is the lone mare in the field, Maven, at 2-1 from post 10.

Maven has raced against the boys before, taking them on earlier this season in the Elitlopp in Stockholm. She finished third in a heat of that race.

Although sporting a new owner (Herb Liverman) and a new trainer (Jimmy Takter, moving from the barn of Jonas Czernyson), Maven will have her regular driver, Yannick Gingras, in the sulky.

“Post 10, going against the boys, that will be interesting for sure,” said Gingras. “That was another tough pick I had to make between Archangel and her, but to me it wasn’t really a tough pick. She’s special and every time I can drive her, I will. My mission is to win the race. Obviously, the four top horses aren’t in the race this week so that can be a huge edge to be able to be locked up into drawing for posts one through five. By winning the elimination it can be a huge advantage because it would be hard for any of them to win the final from the 10 hole.”—

Kathy Parker

Gingras stuck with Maven, choosing the mare over Archangel.
Burke, Takter Dominate In Breeders Crowns

Talk about domination! Combined, trainers Ron Burke and Jimmy Takter entered 54 horses in this year’s Breeders Crowns at the Meadowlands, which is a staggering 34.6 percent of the total 156 entries. Burke will start 20 in the Crown elimins on Friday and Saturday nights, while Takter will send out 19. Add in another 10 from Burke and five from Takter going straight into the finals next weekend, and it’s possible—anything is possible—that the two conditioners could sweep all 12 events.

“We haven’t seen this kind of domination since the Haughton/Continental era,” said Moira Fanning, director of publicity and event operations for the Breeders Crown. “Those barns put a lot of horses in over the early years of the Breeders Crown. This is similar to that.”

Burke entered a record 18 horses in the 2013 Breeders Crowns that were contested at Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs, a number he easily surpassed this year. Fifteen of Burke’s starters last year reached the finals, but he won just one—Foiled Again in the Older Horse Pace. With 10 already in this year’s finals, it seems likely he will top his 15 finalists from last year. He has at least one entry in each of the 12 Crown divisions.

“Five years ago I would have said nobody could have done this, but last year I knew it could be done now that we have younger horses,” said Burke. “I had a feeling we could enter this many.”

Takter entered 13 in last year’s Crowns, with nine making the finals. He did much better than Burke as he won three: Uffizi Hanover (2FP), Father Patrick (2CT) and Shake It Cerry (2FT). Takter won’t be able to repeat in the 2-Year-Old Filly Pace as he doesn’t have a starter, and he is on the sidelines in three of the four older horse events.

Burke said because of the overflow of entries he has had to keep a close eye on the scheduling of not only the training of the horses, but also the scheduling of his staff.

“We have qualifiers and we have horses at Pocono so it is going to be tough,” said Burke. “We have seven trucks and trailers out there and that is just enough to get everything done. It just worked out perfect.”

As for the horses, Burke said, “If they raced last week they got worked light this week. If they missed last week, they trained hard.”

And what does Burke think of the possibility of a “Burke/Takter Crown Dozen?”

“There are a lot of good people and good horses. It’s going to be tough,” he said. “You never know what can happen this late in the year with the weather. That could change so much.”—By Gordon Waterstone/Jay Hochstetler

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**Breeders Crown Entries**

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<tr>
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**Meadowlands Racetrack, Saturday, Nov. 15, 1st elimination, Race 8, Post Time: 9:46 pm**

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<th>Post—Horse (Sire)</th>
<th>Driver/Trainer</th>
<th>Odds</th>
<th>Breeder/Yearling Sale (Price)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1—Go Daddy Go (Ponder)</td>
<td>J. Campbell/R. McIntosh</td>
<td>4-1</td>
<td>R. McIntosh Stables</td>
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<tr>
<td>2—Lost For Words (Well Said)</td>
<td>D. Miller/B. Brown</td>
<td>5-2</td>
<td>Lindwood Farm/Lex ($50,000)</td>
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<td>3—Franco (Rockin Image)</td>
<td>S. Zeron/J. Takter</td>
<td>10-1</td>
<td>S. Schmucker/Hoosier ($67,000)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4—Sicily (Art Major)</td>
<td>C. Callahan/N. Drennan</td>
<td>8-1</td>
<td>Britanny Farms/Lex ($75,000)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5—Rich Wisdom (Dragon Again)</td>
<td>M. Kakaley/R. Burke</td>
<td>7-2</td>
<td>F. Hertrich/Lex ($30,000)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6—Soto (Rock N Roll Heaven)</td>
<td>B. Miller/J. Takter</td>
<td>12-1</td>
<td>Blue Chip Bloodstock/Lex ($130,000)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7—Lyons Again (Dragon Again)</td>
<td>Y. Ginsras/R. Burke</td>
<td>9-2</td>
<td>Hanover Shoe Farms/HB ($20,000)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8—Kona Kid (Well Said)</td>
<td>T. Tetrick/S. Mceneny</td>
<td>20-1</td>
<td>F. Hertrich/HB ($27,000)</td>
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<td>9—Migrate Blue Chip (Rock N Roll Heaven)</td>
<td>R. Zeron/L. Blais</td>
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**2nd elimination, Race 11, Post Time: 10:50 pm**

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<td>2—Arque Hanover (Rock N Roll Heaven)</td>
<td>T. Tetrick/J. Gillis</td>
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<td>Vae LLC/Lex ($67,000)</td>
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<td>6—Cooperstown (Four Starzzz Shark)</td>
<td>M. Kakaley/R. Burke</td>
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<td>7—Tomy Terror (Western Terror)</td>
<td>C. Callahan/J. Butenschoen</td>
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<td>Vae LLC/Lex ($50,000)</td>
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<td>8—Raylan Givens (Rock N Roll Heaven)</td>
<td>A. McCarthy/T. Cancelliere</td>
<td>20-1</td>
<td>Deo Volente Farms/HB ($135,000)</td>
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<td>9—Cartoon Daddy (Art Major)</td>
<td>Y. Ginsras/R. Burke</td>
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<td>R. Newman/HB ($60,000)</td>
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<td>10—In The Arsenal (American Ideal)</td>
<td>B. Sears/K. Harrison</td>
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<td>White Birch Farms/HB ($7,500)</td>
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Top Fillies JK She’salady, Sassa Hanover Meeting For First Time

So how do you get a top horse ready for the Breeders Crown? In the case of the undefeated 2-year-old pacing filly JK She’salady, not anything out of the ordinary.

Nancy Johansson and her husband, Marcus, train JK She’salady for the 3 Brothers Stable. With 10 starts going into a Crown elimination on Friday night at the Meadowlands, Nancy said “Lady” is in great shape.

“We usually just jog her seven laps (over the five-eighths mile oval at White Birch Farm’s training center); then we’ll go four trips on the seven-eighths mile straight track,” said Nancy, who expected to have 40 horses in her stable at White Birch after the Harrisburg sale.

JK She’salady starts in Race 3, and the field includes Sassa Hanover. It will be the first meeting ever between JK She’salady and Sassa Hanover, two fillies regularly driven by Yannick Gingras.

Gingras will be driving Sassa Hanover Friday night. When Gingras hesitated about choosing his filly before the draw for the Crown, Nancy and the 3 Brothers Stable—who bred and own JK She’salady—lined up Tim Tetrick.

“I feel that JK She’salady is one of the greatest 2-year-old pacing fillies in modern times,” said Nancy in announcing the news Sunday. “It is my job to make sure she has all the right puzzle pieces in place in order to be successful.”

The two fillies have missed racing against each other. Although both are New York-sired, JK She’salady has traveled the open stakes circuit while Sassa Hanover stayed in the Empire State until she raced in Lexington. Both fillies competed in stakes action in Lexington on Oct. 3, but drew into separate divisions of the International Stallion Stakes. Both fillies share the 1:50.1 world record.—By Kathy Parker
Crown Chatter

Color’s A Virgin—3YO Filly Pace
“I know she’ll do her job and as long as I do mine I think we’ll have a good showing. It’s a big race, but all in all it’s just another race. That’s how I have to look at it. You can’t really drive any differently. You’re not going to do anything unusual. She’s stayed very consistent all summer. She hasn’t had to do a whole lot of shipping. She’s raced mainly in Indiana and when she raced in the Jugette she didn’t need to get on a trailer because Brian (Brown) trains right there in Delaware. I think a small thing like that probably helps in the end.” — Trace Tetrick about Color’s A Virgin, his first Breeders Crown drive.

Sandbetweenurtoes—3YO Filly Pace
“We feel pretty good going into the race, but I do wish we could have had one more start. She was supposed to race in Lexington, but we think she might have suffered a bout of atrial fibrillation. She bled in the Jugette, and then we got her back home and I trained her and she trained really well, and then I went to Lexington and Larry (Remmen) trained her, just a very light, slow trip, but he noticed she wasn’t right. Our veterinarian guessed a-fib. We sent her to New Bolton, but she wouldn’t cooperate. When she was on the treadmill and they tried to check her, she slowed down. They couldn’t see anything by any other means, so if she had a-fibed, it had resolved. I thought she was really good in her qualifier (second to Sayitallbb on Nov. 7), and of course, we think she’ll be even better this week.” — Ray Remmen, trainer of the 8-time winner.

Happiness—2YO Filly Pace
“She’s a real big, strong-looking mare. We liked her a lot (in the winter). It was disheartening when she came up sore on us (hairlines fracture in a rear pastern bone). I dropped all of her early stakes races. I swam her for six or seven weeks and started bringing her back slowly. Her second lifetime start at (Harrah’s Philadelphia) was kind of a big eye-opener. For a 2-year-old filly to do what she did (winning in 1:52.4) was pretty good. I don’t know if she can compete with the likes of JK She’salady, but that’s why we put her in, to find that out.” — John Butenschoen about the filly he trains and co-owns with breeder Vieux Carre Farms.

Stubborn Belle—2YO Filly Trot
“She’s a lot like her name, she’s a fighter. But it took a while to get on the same page with her. She was pretty single-minded. At first, you had to do things her way. As the year has gone on, she’s gotten a little more manageable. But there sure was a learning curve with her. She’d always rather fight than switch. She’s big and strong. She actually looks like a colt. There’s nothing petite about her.” — trainer John Bax

Somewhere In LA—3YO Colt Pace
“I really like Somewhere In LA. I really think that he can win the Breeders Crown if I can give him the right trip.” — driver Brett Miller
Standardbred Poll

Harness Adelbert Society/Breeders Crown Poll compiled by Harness Racing Communications for the week of November 11, 2014

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Leaders Of The Week

Compiled by the USTA—through November 11, 2014 (week difference Nov. 5-11).

Harness Racing Leaders

Leading North American-Based Money-Winning Horses

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<th>Father Patrick (3tc)</th>
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Leading Money-Winning Drivers

| Yannick Gingras | 1,971 | 495-333-242 | .386 | $14,920,112 ($478,119) |
| Tim Tetrick | 2,339 | 450-360-330 | .325 | 10,340,256 (236,488) |
| Ron Pierce | 2,742 | 415-434-349 | .282 | 9,470,348 (501,415) |
| David Miller | 2,077 | 304-305-301 | .276 | 8,725,200 (236,488) |

Leaders Of The Week

Leading Breeders

| Hanover Shoe Farms Inc. | 1,083 | 755 | 2,350 | $26,651,971 |
| Winbak Farm | 1,009 | 639 | 1,830 | 15,171,149 |
| Brittany Farms | 311 | 232 | 774 | 14,127,182 |
| Perretti Farms | 350 | 240 | 765 | 7,993,448 |
| Kentuckiana Farms Gen Par | 262 | 171 | 506 | 5,339,360 |
| Blue Chip Bloodstock Inc. | 184 | 129 | 403 | 4,827,266 |
| Steve Stewart | 142 | 104 | 319 | 4,796,066 |
| White Birch Farm | 162 | 111 | 360 | 4,377,953 |

Leaders Of The Week

Ranked by wins for Nov. 5-11 from results at major North American pari-mutuel tracks.

Drivers

Ronnie Wrenn Jr. | 69 | 21-12-8 |
Corey Callahan | 85 | 19-13-4 |
Aaron Merriman | 90 | 17-14-14 |
Kevin Switzer Jr. | 50 | 16-15-11 |
W. Drew Campbell | 52 | 16-7-7 |
Ron Pierce | 78 | 16-10-8 |
Casey Leonard | 53 | 12-8-6 |
Dan Noble | 59 | 12-9-9 |
Mike Wilder | 45 | 12-6-7 |
Yannick Gingras | 46 | 12-4-6 |
Billy Dobson | 40 | 11-6-4 |
Bruce Aldrich Jr. | 67 | 11-8-10 |
Dave Palone | 45 | 11-3-5 |
Jason Bartlett | 55 | 11-7-8 |
Trace Tetrick | 51 | 11-9-0 |
George Brennan | 41 | 10-7-4 |
George Napolitano Jr. | 51 | 10-8-6 |
Trevor Henry | 47 | 10-7-1 |

Trainers

Ron Burke | 25 |
Scott Di Domenico | 9 |
Rene Allard | 8 |
Philip Sowers | 7 |
Virgil Morgan Jr. | 7 |
Grant Wilfong | 6 |
Heidi Rohr | 6 |
P. J. Fraley | 6 |
Don Eash | 5 |
Richard Banca | 5 |
Robert Lounsberry | 5 |
Douglas Levis | 4 |
Edward Zuckoff Jr. | 4 |
Gerry Sarama | 4 |
Jacob Hartline | 4 |
James Clouser Jr. | 4 |
Johnny Yoder | 4 |
Jordana Derue | 4 |
Julius Czermann Jr. | 4 |
Kevin Carr | 4 |
Kyle Spagnola | 4 |
Loralee Johnson | 4 |
Marvin Rabin | 4 |
Michael Deters | 4 |
Pat Lachance | 4 |
Perry Smith | 4 |
Randy Bendis | 4 |
Tyler Nostad | 4 |
William Moffett | 4 |