

## 2015 QROOI Awards Night

By: Jennifer Morrison

The first time Rick Kennedy sent out his horse Fiesty Icon for a serious piece of track work as a 2-year-old early in 2014, the gelding proved to be a difficult student. With jockey Carly Furlonger riding, Fiesty Icon bucked off his pilot and took off on his own.

But Kennedy had a feeling about the youngster he had purchased privately from the Picov Cattle Co. as a yearling.

"I had his half-sister, Chissled and Fiesty and she was a really honest runner," said Kennedy, who owns a farm in Mount Albert, ON. "He looked like a neat kind of horse."

Two years later, that "neat" horse was voted the Horse of the Year by the Quarter Racing Owners of Ontario Inc. Directors at a ceremony and dinner in Ajax, ON on November 21, 2015.

Over 120 attended the entertaining Awards ceremony which included dinner and dancing and plenty of video images of the year's stars.

Although Kennedy was a little surprised Fiesty Icon won the vote for the top award since the competition included older stakes winners Mr Victory Six, 2014 champion Mitford and the hotshot filly Embrace Extravagence.

But he also told Furlonger earlier this year that she was riding the 2015 Horse of the Year.

"Yep, he told me earlier this season I was on the Horse of the Year," said Furlonger, who, along with her husband Keith Dimech work for Kennedy at his farm and at Woodbine racetrack with his string of Thoroughbreds.

Things started off a bit unsettled for Fiesty Icon (Sugarman Perry – Fiesty Spirit by Special Effort) as he exited his season opener at Ajax Downs in May with a virus. He did not race again until Aug. 9 in a trial for the Picov Derby which he won at 6-1.

The gelding finished a strong second to Embrace Extravagence in the Picov Derby final after a bumpy start and then romped in the Ontario Sires Stakes Derby trial in early Sept., posting a 95 Speed Index for a time of :17.760 for 350-yards.

Fiesty Icon duplicated that effort on Sept. 28 when he won the OSS Derby “with authority” according to the Equibase chart, collecting \$30,960 (Can.) and boosting season earnings to over \$63,000 from three wins in five starts.

Fiesty Icon was tied with the mare Im Aquicktrick, owned by Steve Hunter and trained by Janet Grice, for High Point 3-year-old in 2015 as both had 28 points.

Kennedy said Fiesty Icon will begin training again in February and point to the Alex Picov Championship in 2016.

Brian Bell was the year’s High Point Jockey with 394 points from a record of 42-31-27 in 173 mounts. Bell was coming off a serious injury when he suffered a broken leg on a training day in 2014. Bell has been the leading rider at Ajax Downs before, most recently in 2011.

“I loved all the horses I rode, I expected them to win,” said Bell, who won the title despite not winning a stakes race during the year. “I feel awesome, strong and better than ever.”

Here are the High Point horses and humans from the QROOI for 2015:

HORSE OF THE YEAR – FIESTY ICON (28 pts.)

HIGH POINT 3-YEAR-OLD GELDING – FIESTY ICON

HIGH POINT 3-YEAR-OLD MARE – IM AQUICKTRICK (28) (\*tied for High Point 3-year-old)

HIGH POINT 3-YEAR-OLD STALLION – OBSESSEDWITHBEDUINO (13)

HIGH POINT TWO-YEAR-OLD GELDING – PANTHER HERO (27)

HIGH POINT TWO-YEAR-OLD FILLY – ICE FISHN (18)

HIGH POINT ADED GELDING – MITFORD (33)

HIGH POINT AGED MARE – FIRST DOWN THE TRACK 23

HIGH POINT AGED STALLION – SM CHICKS IN GARTERS 32

HIGH POINT OWNER/TRAINER – DARLENE BALLIS – HUNDERUP (138)

- Runner-up - Erik Lehtinen (66)

HIGH POINT OWNER – CHRISTINE TAVARES (221)

- Runner-up - Richard Wincikaby/DK Training

HIGH POINT ONTARIO BREEDER – CHRISTINE TAVARES (196)

- Runner-up - Picov Cattle Co.

HIGH POINT JOCKEY – BRIAN BELL (296)

- Runner-up – Tony Phillips

HIGH POINT TRAINER – RENEE WILSON (374)

- Runner-up Joe Tavares

GEORGE EGERTON MEMORIAL AWARD for an individual who goes above and beyond the call to help all people at the track – RODNEY QUINN

KEN MUCKLESTON AWARD – for a person who represents, promotes and upholds integrity of the sport

NICK COUKOS