

SAVAGE Pacer



Minnesota Harness Racing Hall of Fame: Dan Patch is "shoo in" as inaugural honoree

By Ruth Anne Maddox; Staff Writer; Savage Pacer; Friday, February 10, 2006

"He was basically a shoo-in, pun intended" said Beth Dale when she spoke about Dan Patch's induction to the Minnesota Harness Racing Hall of Fame on Saturday (Feb. 4) at Shakopee's Canterbury Inn.

Dale, a member of Minnesota Harness Racing Inc. (MHRI), said the organization decided it was time for Minnesota to establish a Hall of Fame, and Dan Patch's induction was a natural first selection. Hall of Fame members are defined as horses or individuals whose contributions have meant a great deal to harness racing in Minnesota.

Dan Patch was the pacer owned by the city's namesake, Marion Willis Savage. Dan paced the mile at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds in a record-breaking time of 1:55 on Sept. 8, 1906.



Dan Patch Historical Society members: Jens Bohn, Janet Williams, Will Williams, Nancy Allen, Greg Lind, George Augustinack & Jed Williams

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Other states already have harness racing Halls of Fame in place. The Harness Racing Museum in New York inducted Dan Patch into the Hall of Horse Immortals in 1953, the same year he was inducted into the American Hall of Fame for Trotting and Pacing.

Even though Dan Patch was a pacer, he is included in footage of a video titled "Great American Trotters," and an excerpt was shown at the induction ceremony.

In addition to MHRI members, the ceremony was attended by members of the Dan Patch Historical Society and descendants of M.W. Savage.

Mary Phyllis Colwell, granddaughter of M.W. Savage, along with her daughter, Susan Colwell Allen; Bob Savage, a

great-grandson to M.W. Savage; and Mary Savage Ward, a great-great-granddaughter, joined members of the Dan Patch Historical Society in accepting a plaque from the MHRI.

Dan Patch Historical Society member Janet Williams said it was interesting to hear Dale, who is from New Ulm, speak about the importance of the display at the Savage Public Library. "She said it was the closest thing there is to a harness racing museum in the state," Williams said.

Dale said that she expects many MHRI members will pay a visit to the Savage Library now that they know about the Heritage Room. "It was good for our members to know more about the Dan Patch Historical Society," Dale said, "and I hope the Dan Patch Historical Society gains members from this knowledge."

Historical Society member Greg Lind, who also is a member of the Dan Patch Days committee, said that an open invitation was extended to members of the Savage family as well as the MHRI to join in the festivities for the event slated June 23 to 25 at Community Park. Last year was the first in many years that descendants of M.W. Savage were in attendance and they even took part in the annual parade.

Historical Society member Will Williams also issued a plea for the group to keep Dan Patch in mind when naming its new racing facility set to open in Anoka County in 2007. "It would be a travesty not to have Dan Patch's name involved," he said.

Not only was Dan Patch chosen as the first Hall of Fame inductee because of his place in harness racing history, but also because the harness racing world and the city of Savage will recognize the horse this year on the 100-year anniversary of his world record.

"Dan Patch was, obviously, the greatest horse to come from Minnesota even though he wasn't Minnesota bred," Dale said of the horse that was born in Indiana in 1896.

And, despite the time that has elapsed since his record-setting race against the clock, Dale said, Dan Patch is still widely recognized today.

The other inductee for 2006 was the late Jack Budahn, founder of Bongards Creameries and a harness horseman who was very involved in harness racing, Dale said.

It is likely that future inductees will include M.W. Savage and the group also hopes to include living horses and individuals. For consideration, the person or the horse must have made a significant contribution to harness racing in Minnesota "and if they have made national contributions as well, even better," Dale said.

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