

THE RACE & PACE

ALBERTA BOUND

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Driver/trainer Ryan Grundy's advice to young horsemen shows the wisdom of someone who's invested their life in the industry.

"Definitely just listen to everybody.

Take advice, don't ever get too high on yourself.

Just keep your nose to the grindstone,"

Sage advice, and the veteran has followed it for his entire career. Hailing from Steinbach, Manitoba, Grundy knew what he wanted to do since he was six years old. As a fourth-generation horseman, it wasn't hard to find somewhere to start. He worked on his grandfather's farm, helping wherever he was needed and learning everything he could. At eight years old, he learned to train horses. At 16, he got his trainer's license. And finally, at 19, Grundy got his driver's license. He set off on his own soon after.

His career has taken him all over Canada. He started in his home province before trying the tracks in Alberta. When Calgary harness racing stopped, Grundy stuck to his own advice and kept his nose to the grindstone. Moving between Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, he was able to fill some of the gaps in races. He would often bring his horses to Alberta to work for big stables. He even did some brief stints in Grande Prairie and Lethbridge, but he says the situation was never as good as it should have been.

Last winter, a series of layoffs in the industry made things even tougher. That's when Grundy decided to opt for a change in scenery. He took his horses and moved to Sacramento, California. One of his great uncles who had been in racing for 30 years lived there. The family connection was one of the biggest reasons Grundy relocated. He raced at Cal Expo, where he made himself known with a string of wins, then returned in April for Century Downs' opening.

But while everything worked out in the end, Grundy is grateful to be able to return to Alberta on a more permanent basis. Not only does he have family here, but he calls it the best place to race, with the best money. Now that he and his wife have made Alberta home, he can focus on the challenges ahead.

"Every day is a new day".

"Horses have problems and you're always trying to figure [it] out, get them to be them a little bit faster, a little bit better. Always keeps you on your toes."

Adding to the workload is his stable, which he and his wife started. They currently have nine horses in training. Among them is Alberta Sires Stake winner Senga Naptha. She's a two-year-old filly, a record holder at Century Downs according to Grundy, and the current star of his stable. He's also had a lot of luck with his overnight horses. It's all good news, as he plans to focus on training horses in Alberta.

As for next season, he may return to California for the winter—but only to train his younger horses. Escaping the cold weather is a plus, and he can train them to withstand a Calgary summer upon their return. It'll all depend on what the racing schedule looks like back home, where he'll be up against some of the young horsemen who are just stepping into their careers.

But even as decades of experience separate him from the young horsemen who are just starting their careers, he says they have one thing in common: what the industry means to them.

"It's gotta be, every day, [what] it means to all of us. They're younger, they could maybe change if they had to, but it's still tough because you train. We're so specialized in what we're doing, it's hard to go out on the regular workforce and put it on a regular resume. It doesn't mean much."

