

HOLLYWOOD *Casino*[®] AT CHARLES TOWN RACES

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Charles Town's Montano an Eclipse Award Finalist

Charles Town, WV (January 5, 2013) – For the second time since 2009, the jockey colony at Hollywood Casino at Charles Town Races will be represented at the Eclipse Awards, as Jose Montano was named one of the three finalists in the Apprentice Jockey category in an announcement by the National Thoroughbred Racing Association on Saturday morning. Montano joins fellow finalists Irad Ortiz, Jr. and Angel Suarez in vying for the honor at the Eclipse Awards, held January 19 at Gulfstream Park. In 2009, Charles Town-based Luis Batista was nominated as the nation's top apprentice, but finished third behind Luis Saez and winner Christian Santiago Reyes.

Montano who picked up the first victory of his career on October 4, 2011 aboard Catena Zapata at Mountaineer Park had 1,075 mounts nationwide in 2012 and responded with 225 wins and racked up \$3,613,984 in earnings. However, all but 9 of those victories and \$170,000 in earnings came in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia, where Montano has established himself as the track's leading rider finishing more than 100 wins and \$1,000,000 ahead of runner-up Travis Dunkelberger in the 2012 jockey standings.

"I started riding at Mountaineer, but I just like all the people here around Charles Town so much," said Montano of his home track. "I have to thank all of the people here who gave me a chance to ride."

One of those who gave him a chance to ride in 2012, was Charles Town's leading trainer, Jeff Runco, whose 160 wins last year placed him in the Top 10 nationally. Despite winning more than 3,000 races in his career and employing his share of bug riders, Runco considers Montano to be one of the elite he's come across.

"He's a good rider and he makes good decisions," explained Runco. "He's one of the more advanced bug riders I've seen in quite some time."

Montano's best performances in 2012 for Charles Town's top barn came on April 27 when he piloted 4 winners on the card for Runco and later rode a pair of winners for him in the West Virginia Breeders' Classics.

"He has great work habits and shows up at work on time and that's why he does well," Runco added. "He's a very good bug rider and is going to make a very good journeyman as well."

While Montano himself admits the trainers who have employed him have contributed to his candidacy for an Eclipse Award, those around him laud the aforementioned work habits he routinely displays as the key driver.

"He's just an extremely hard worker," says his agent Billy Kennedy. "He's always there. He's never late. There's just never a problem with him and he's always trying to get better."

Whether or not he's able to best the likes of Ortiz, Jr., who won a trio of Grade 1's at Saratoga and also captured the \$1,000,000 Pennsylvania Derby (G2) remains to be seen, but Montano is grateful to simply be named a finalist for the award.

“The award - it’s a big deal and such an honor for me,” he said about being nominated. “But still I want to just keep getting better in 2013.”

The 42nd Eclipse Awards will get underway at 8pm EST on January 19 and will be televised live by HRTV.

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A Penn National Gaming property, Hollywood Casino at Charles Town Races is a world-class resort destination, offering visitors a truly Las Vegas-style gaming experience that includes 3,500 slot machines, more than 100 table games, a 50-table poker room, and both live and simulcast horse racing year round. A wide range of quality restaurants and bars are offered, including authentic Hong Kong cuisine and sushi at 9 Dragons, a 350-seat Epic Buffet, and Final Cut Steakhouse—proud recipient of the Wine Spectator Award of Excellence. The casino also offers an exciting nightlife experience at Skybox Sports Bar and H Lounge, with live entertainment and famous headliners performing for free. Hotel accommodations can be found on property at the Inn at Charles Town, which features 153 comfortable guest rooms, spacious suites and a variety of venues to host business or social functions.

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