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CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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**DISCUSSIONS CONTINUE FOR EARLY OPENING OF OAK TREE**

MONROVIA, CA – The Oak Tree Racing Association is seeking full industry support for legislation to authorize one or two extra days of racing this fall at Santa Anita Park in order to schedule four nationally televised stakes races as preps for the Breeders' Cup later in the meet, Oak Tree Executive Vice President Sherwood Chillingworth told the California Horse Racing Board on Thursday.

The Oak Tree meet in Arcadia is scheduled from October 1 through November 9 with the Breeders' Cup set for October 25, which is a little more than three weeks into the meet. By opening earlier on Saturday, September 27, and/or Sunday, September 28, Oak Tree could run four of its stakes races as major preps exactly four weeks before the championship day.

However, September 27-28 is the closing weekend for the Los Angeles County Fair meet at Fairplex Park in Pomona, and an overlap of even one racing day with nearby Santa Anita would mean "financial suicide" for his meet, explained LACF President James Henwood. "Yet we want to be a team player and we are going to do our very best to make this (overlap) happen."

Chillingworth and Henwood have had ongoing discussions on ways for Oak Tree to compensate Fairplex for the anticipated reduction in revenue attributable to the overlap – a figure that could exceed \$750,000. Chillingworth and Breeders' Cup officials told the Board they are looking at additional ways to compensate Fairplex, such as arranging for a short documentary on LACF/Fairplex that would be aired on national television.

Henwood told the Board that he has put a couple of other "integral" matters on the bargaining table, such as obtaining Oak Tree support for possible legislation to fund a new turf course and an enlarged main track at Fairplex.

Henwood also wants additional funds for the cost of keeping Fairplex open year-round as a training center for horses that ship to the major tracks to race. Fairplex was receiving \$2.3 million a year from purses and racetrack commissions for this purpose until last year when the industry committee overseeing this program cut that figure to \$1.5 million. Henwood wants the funding restored to \$2.3 million and seeks Oak Tree's support. Several owners, trainers, and workers from Fairplex spoke in favor of complete funding for Fairplex. CHRB Chairman Roger Licht assigned himself and Commissioner John Sperry to a special committee to help mediate this matter.

The California Horse Racing Law limits the number of weeks of racing that can be run in different zones of the State, and the Los Angeles area racetracks already have reached the maximum allowed by law. Thus, legislation is required to add the one or two days in question. Chillingworth said Oak Tree cannot move forward in Sacramento until everyone in the industry is behind the legislation, noting that “in order to get the statute amended quickly, it has to be done on an emergency basis and with no opposition.”

Chillingworth also noted that ESPN requires some assurance by February 6 that the early opening is likely to occur in order for the network to keep the time slot open for airing any stakes races. The four stakes that Oak Tree would run that weekend are the Yellow Ribbon Stakes, Lady’s Secret Breeders’ Cup Handicap, Oak Leaf Stakes, and Oak Tree Breeders’ Cup Mile.

Chairman Licht said the Board is “willing to help mediate these issues and try to bring this to a head.” He asked the two members of the CHRB Legislative Committee – Commissioners Marie Moretti (chairwoman) and Alan Landsburg – to work with the industry on this matter.

In other business, the Board approved the license application for the Capital Racing Association to conduct a harness meet at Cal Expo from February 28 through July 26.

The Board approved the application for YouBet.com to continue providing advance deposit wagering in California.

The Board approved a regulation requiring that 10 percent of the net purse earned on any horse finishing first, second, or third at a quarter-horse meeting be deducted and deposited into the trainer’s account. Last year the Board adopted an identical rule for thoroughbred meets.

The Board approved the amended by-laws of the Thoroughbred Owners of California designating that three seats on the TOC Board be filled by trainers who own horses.

The Board authorized the distribution of \$244,000 by Hollywood Park Charities to 40 beneficiaries, including \$118,000 to racing-related charities.

Peter Tunney, representing Magna Entertainment Corp. at Golden Gate Fields, advised the Board that construction is well underway on a new veterinary hospital in the stable area. He predicted that construction will be completed in about one month.

Commissioner Landsburg reported that the CHRB Pari-Mutuel Operations Committee is working with totalizator companies and other involved parties to determine the practicality of shutting down wagering a minute or so before the start of the race for certain out-of-state locations that habitually transmit their wagers to the host pools at the last second. Sometimes the late addition of these wagers causes the odds to change noticeably during the running of the race. Although the CHRB has determined that in all cases those wagers were placed before the start of the race, the public has a negative perception of the late odds changes.

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