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CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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JOCKEYS SEEK NATIONAL HEALTH STANDARDS, WEIGHT CHANGES

ALBANY, CA - CHRB Chairman John Harris and other California racing commissioners said the Jockeys' Guild made a "very persuasive case" in a presentation Thursday and indicated their willingness to work with the Guild to update the scale of weights and implement health standards that will serve as a model for the rest of the country.

"The vast majority of jockeys have to struggle tremendously to make their weight (assignment in a race) and they are doing things to themselves that are terrible," said Barry Broad, a lobbyist for the Guild. "The gamut runs from sitting in a sweatbox for hours, taking diuretics, and making themselves throw up."

Dr. David Seftel, the track physician at Golden Gate Fields and Bay Meadows, said these unsafe weight-reduction practices by jockeys are leading to "dehydration, malnutrition, and diminished immunity."

To deal with these national health problems, the Guild unveiled an "integrated" proposal for the CHRB and other regulatory bodies to consider that has three elements dealing with riding weights, actual jockey weights, and health standards. Under the proposal, the minimum jockey weight would be 118 pounds for jockeys in Arabian and thoroughbred races and 123 pounds for Appaloosas, paints, quarter horses, and mules.

"The reason we are starting in California is because this is a state that has always cooperated with jockeys and where we can get something done," explained Broad. "There are people in the industry here in California who are fair, responsive, and who care about the jockeys."

Under the proposal, every horse would carry 10 pounds of riding gear, including any or all of the following: anti-slip pad, arm number, boots, eye protection, foam pad, gloves, goggles (four pairs), helmet cover, leggings, metal stirrups, number cloth, over-girth, pants, pommel pad, rubber bands, saddle, saddle pad, safety helmet, safety vest, silks, socks, stock tie, T-shirt, turtleneck, under-girth, underwear, and whip.

These items would be weighed separately from jockeys and would not be counted as part of the weight of jockeys, who would weigh in "stripped, absent any riding gear, clothing." Jockeys weighing less than 118/123 would be required to carry extra weight to bring them up to the minimum.

Additionally, the proposal would require all jockeys to maintain a minimum body fat content of 5 percent in order to ride.

Chris McCarron, the general manager at Santa Anita Park who retired from riding last year but still looks very fit and lean at 118 pounds, used a simple hand-held device that measured his own body fat at 16.9 percent, which gave the racing commissioners some idea of what body fat of less than 5 percent must be like.

Chairman Harris directed the CHRB staff to begin a process of taking the proposal from the Guild and developing a regulatory format. Meanwhile, the Guild will continue explaining the proposal to other interested parties.

In other business, the owner of the Bay Meadows property reported that it will take at least three more years to acquire the “entitlements” necessary to put the property to other use, so racing is guaranteed for at least that long and perhaps “another 20 years beyond that.”

Terrence Fancher, executive managing director of Stockbridge, which acquired the property last year, told the racing commissioners there is “no imminent change” in store for Bay Meadows and that his company wishes to “keep racing going.”

Scott Daruty, chief U.S. counsel for Magna Entertainment Corp., which operates the race meet at Bay Meadows and owns and operates the property and race meets at Golden Gate and Santa Anita, said that if and when racing ever comes to an end at Bay Meadows, there are other venues that will guarantee the “continuation of live racing in Northern California.” He cited MEC’s proposal to build a racing facility in Dixon as “one piece” of the racing picture and expanded use of the Golden Gate facility as another.

Representatives of Northern California fairs, including the general managers at Pleasanton and Santa Rosa, said the fairs are here to stay and indicated they would race additional dates if they became available. Santa Rosa is installing a turf course and Pleasanton has a proposal for a turf course.

The Board asked for information on published reports that XpressBet “struck a deal” with a group of horseplayers to process their wagers and provide rebates on those wagers. TOC Executive Director Drew Couto said he and other TOC representatives met with MEC executives to discuss “handle practices and wagering trends.”

“Those matters are sensitive and confidential, so we would rather not discuss them publicly at this time,” said Couto. “We are having continued dialogue and trying to move forward.”

A related agenda item focused on CHRB Rule 1950.1, which requires racing associations and simulcasting organizations to include a prohibition against rebates in their agreements with off-track betting facilities. Various speakers addressed the difficulty of enforcing this provision, and there was a lengthy discussion of the relative merits and dangers of rebates.

Noting that the TOC has veto authority over all simulcasting agreements, Chairman Harris asked Couto if the TOC intends to “draw a line” on rebates at some point. Couto responded that the TOC continues to study this matter but “it’s not going to go on in perpetuity.”

Staff presented an update on handle by Advance Deposit Wagering providers in California for 2003 and early 2004 indicating that TVG and Youbet.com have “continued to expand their influence while XpressBet appears to have lost ground so far this year.”

For the first two months of this year. XpressBet handle of \$9,425,650 declined 21 percent from the same period in 2003 while TVG handle among California account holders of \$12,438,662 marked an 83-percent increase and Youbet.com’s handle of \$13,983,724 was up 30 percent.

“It’s interesting that TVG has no California product (does not offer wagering on Santa Anita or Golden Gate) but more California bettors are wagering on races out of state,” noted Licht. “The obvious explanation is television distribution. An emerging trend is the impact of TV content. People will bet what you show them.”

This led to a discussion of failed efforts by XpressBet to significantly broaden its television distribution despite early promises to do so. Harris noted his “frustration” at turning on his television and seeing “bizarre” things like “car lifting” but not the races at Santa Anita.

Ron Luniewski, president of XpressBet, said there is a “lot of upheaval in cable right now and those people just aren’t focusing on horse racing.” He described ongoing efforts by XpressBet and HRTV to broaden their distribution.

Jerry Moss, attending his first meeting as a CHRB commissioner following his appointment by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, asked Luniewski if his company is “going to put a time limit” on those efforts. Luniewski responded that XpressBet and HRTV remain firmly committed to the California market.

Tony Allevato, vice president of TVG, said his company has completed an agreement with Comcast that will put its races in up to “7 million more homes by the end of the year and in some Los Angeles area cities before the Kentucky Derby (May 1).”

Jeff True, western region general manager of Youbet.com, noted that his company increased handle in California without any television because Youbet.com is purely an Internet provider. He credited the “functionality and ease” of the site and aggressive marketing to “online traders and other gambling sites” for some of the increased business.

The Board approved a request by the California Thoroughbred Horsemen’s Foundation to name Robert Bean, a thoroughbred trainer, and Geri Forrester, a thoroughbred owner, to serve on the CTHF board.

The Board approved a new agreement between the TOC and the Jockeys’ Guild regarding the health and welfare benefits for California jockeys.

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