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CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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STEWARDS SUSPEND PAT VALENZUELA THROUGH 2004

ARCADIA, CA – The stewards at Santa Anita Park ruled Friday that their previously issued suspension of jockey Patrick Valenzuela will remain in effect through the balance of this year but they left the door open for his possible reinstatement in 2005.

“Having participated in a formal hearing to evaluate the conditional license contract entered into by jockey Patrick Valenzuela and the California Horse Racing Board on December 31, 2003, it is the finding of this Board of Stewards that the contract has been violated and considered to be void,” said the official ruling. “The suspension portion (of their January 23, 2004, ruling) remains in effect (and Valenzuela) is denied access to the restricted area of the premises within this jurisdiction.

“Furthermore, it is the (stewards’) recommendation that Patrick Valenzuela be eligible to participate in a fitness for license hearing for re-evaluation as of January 1, 2005.”

Valenzuela could appeal the stewards’ ruling to the CHRB, in which case the case would be referred to an administrative law judge, who would hear the case and make a recommendation to the Board. The seven racing commissioners would rule on the recommendation. Valenzuela could also request a stay from the CHRB to allow him to ride pending the appeal.

The contract referred to in Friday’s ruling stems from a February 11, 2000, suspension of Valenzuela for “engaging in the use of a dangerous drug – amphetamine.” Nearly two years later, the CHRB issued a one-year license to Valenzuela on December 14, 2001, subject to 12 conditions specified in the contract, including requirements that he report to the CHRB office each race-day morning, at which time he could be tested, and that such tests be conducted at least eight times each month. He signed identical contracts each year thereafter.

On January 22, 2004, Valenzuela telephoned the stewards to report that he had injured an ankle and could not ride that afternoon. A steward instructed him to come in for testing, to which he agreed. As the afternoon progressed and he did not show up at the CHRB office as instructed by the steward, investigators called his telephone numbers of record and left messages for him. Valenzuela did not appear nor return the calls. Still unable to reach him the next morning, the stewards issued a temporary suspension pending a formal hearing. That hearing took place last Sunday, March 28.