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CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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STEWARDS DISMISS COMPLAINT AGAINST WYGOD

INGLEWOOD, CA – The Hollywood Park Board of Stewards dismissed the California Horse Racing Board’s complaint against Martin J. Wygod after testimony and evidence presented during a three-hour hearing Saturday failed to substantiate the charges brought against the licensed owner of the filly Sweet Catomine.

“It is the decision of this Board of Stewards that all charges against Mr. Wygod are going to be dismissed in the furtherance of justice,” steward Dennis Nevin announced after conferring with fellow stewards Pete Pedersen and Thomas Ward.

The CHRB filed a complaint April 11 alleging that Wygod violated rules pertaining to the identification of horses and conduct detrimental to horse racing. However, evidence presented by Deputy Attorney General James Ahern, and testimony by CHRB Senior Special Investigator Christopher Loop, who conducted the investigation, did not support the charges.

The hearing had been scheduled to continue Sunday, but Richard Kendall, one of two attorneys representing Wygod at the hearing, asked the stewards to dismiss the complaint immediately. Describing the CHRB complaint as “irresponsible,” Kendall said his client was never interviewed by Loop. Kendall pointed out that no evidence was presented to show that Sweet Catomine had any unknown physical problems leading up to her fifth-place finish in the Santa Anita Derby on April 9. He said it was commonly known that she was treated with authorized bleeder medication before her races. Therefore, he urged that all charges be dismissed as unfounded.

“There was a rush to judgment here,” said Kendall. “Now is the time to rectify that error in judgment by dismissing this complaint.”

Dean Kerkhoff, a racehorse transport driver who is charged in a separate complaint with misidentifying Sweet Catomine as a “pony” when she left the track one morning, said he received his instructions to take the filly to a clinic from a farm manager. Kerkhoff said he never spoke with Wygod. Julio Canani, who trained Sweet Catomine at the time, and is charged in a separate complaint pertaining to statements made about the filly’s condition, said he had not spoken with Wygod beforehand about shipping the filly to the clinic.

When Nevin asked Ahern if any of his other witnesses would provide anything more substantive concerning Wygod, the deputy attorney general indicated they would not. The stewards then conferred briefly before announcing the decision to dismiss the complaint.

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