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CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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BOARD MOVING FORWARD WITH REVISED WEIGHING PROCEDURES, ENFORCEMENT

ARCADIA, CA – The California Horse Racing Board indicated its intention Thursday to revise procedures for weighing jockeys for races and to enforce all existing regulations relating to the weighing process in order to make certain that horses carry their assigned weights and the public is accurately and completely informed about those weights.

“We need to ensure the integrity of our procedures and provide transparency to the whole process,” said CHRB Chairman John Harris, who last month created an ad hoc committee to review the matter and named Commissioner Richard Shapiro to chair that committee.

In his report Thursday to the full Board, Shapiro said the committee, which is comprised of representatives of jockeys, horse owners, trainers, racing associations, and racing officials, already has developed some proposed procedures and is continuing to work on remaining issues. The proposed procedures make no changes to the scale of weights, nor do they address health issues, which are separate matters being addressed by the CHRB and racing industry.

All jockeys at Santa Anita Park, Golden Gate Fields, and Los Alamitos Race Course have been provided with CHRB rules concerning the attendance, behavior, and responsibilities of riders and officials as they pertain to the weighing of riders. Shapiro said that at a date to be determined and announced beforehand, the stewards and CHRB investigators would begin rigidly enforcing the new procedures and existing regulations.

Shapiro reported that under the newly proposed procedures, each jockey would weigh out for each race in full public view and wearing all clothing and equipment for the race. After weighing out, jockeys would immediately proceed to a designated common area or to the saddling paddock. Management at each racing venue would be required to provide three scales for the weighing out/in process. One scale would remain in the jockey’s room and another would remain near the winner’s circle for the weigh in, while a third scale would be placed in an unrestricted area for the weigh out in full public view. Racing associations would be provided a timeframe to install video cameras to observe and record the weigh out process for each race. A steward or designee would be present when jockeys weigh out for each race.

The following language would appear in the official racing program each day: “A jockey’s riding weight includes riding clothing, saddle, undergirth, and pad. The weight listed in the program does not include the jockey’s safety equipment, which consists of the helmet, goggles, safety vest, and overgirth, and may also include a pommel pad, girth channel, and/or chamois. The total weight of this excluded safety equipment shall not exceed five pounds. The saddlecloths, whip, and bridle are not included in the five-pound limitation on safety equipment. The weight of the saddlecloth, bridle, whip, and all safety equipment is additive to and not included in the program weight or announced overweight.”

Approximately one hour before the first race, the clerk of scales would weigh all jockeys without their clothing or equipment in order to ascertain their actual body weights. A jockey would be required to obtain direct verbal permission from the stewards to report to the jockey’s room later than one hour prior to the first race.

Each rider would designate his or her safety equipment and register the weight of that equipment with the clerk of scales. Each jockey’s safety equipment would be marked to verify that it was approved and that the clerk of scales had weighed it. The clerk of scales would be required to randomly verify the weight of the safety equipment of at least three riders each race day.

The ad hoc committee will continue discussions and research relating to uniformity in saddlecloths and other equipment carried by the horse in races, including a review of American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) standards for equine safety equipment to determine the brands and ratings of safety vests and helmets for approval.

In another matter pertaining to jockeys, the CHRB staff and Commissioner Shapiro provided a review and update on congressional hearings on jockey welfare issues. A U.S. House of Representatives subcommittee was critical of current management of the Jockeys’ Guild during hearings last month.

“I’ve been in contact with congressional investigators,” said Shapiro, “and I have been asked to testify at another hearing, which is scheduled November 17, about our efforts here in California to address similar concerns.

“I’ve also had conversations with Barry Broad (a former lobbyist for the Guild), and addressing common concerns with him. And I’ve been speaking with a health insurance broker to solicit competitive bids for health insurance for our jockeys to replace the self-insurance program that the Guild now has.”

Approximately \$1 million in uncashed refunds from the pari-mutuel system is allocated each year for health and welfare benefits for California jockeys. The CHRB has arranged for the California Department of Finance to begin an audit of the Jockeys’ Guild program to verify those funds have been properly handled. That audit will begin November 15.

“We hope to get answers from this forensic audit and from additional testimony from the continuing congressional hearings,” said Shapiro.

In other business, Dr. Ron Jensen, the CHRB equine medical director, reported that a pilot program to implant microchips in thoroughbreds racing in Southern California next year received a huge boost when the California Department of Food and Agriculture approved a \$97,000 grant of federal funds earmarked for the National Animal Identification Program.

Although the national program is designed to quickly determine the identities and locations of animals in the event of emergencies, the California horse-racing industry can utilize microchip technology for additional purposes, including the accurate identification of horses entering and leaving each stable area and providing racing officials with an accurate inventory of horses on the grounds. Dr. Jensen said the details for the pilot program are still being worked out.

The Board addressed the announcement by Hollywood Park this week that all turf racing for the upcoming fall meet has been canceled after horsemen and racetrack executives agreed the newly installed turf course was unsafe. The new turf course now has been torn out and another new course will be installed for the 2006 spring-summer meet.

Hollywood Park executive Jack Liebau reported an agreement has been reached with the Thoroughbred Owners of California and Golden Gate Fields in Northern California to address the problems at hand.

Under the agreement, Hollywood Park will race three or four fewer days this fall and will shift the purse money that had been designated for its turf races to overnight purses, except for \$166,000 that will be used to supplement turf racing at Golden Gate. Overnight purses at Hollywood Park are projected to increase 14 percent. The racing secretaries at Hollywood Park and Golden Gate, as well as the TOC, will confer on the best use of the \$166,000 of purse monies to be transferred north in order to provide turf-racing opportunities. Transportation costs will be paid for horses that ship from Southern California to Northern California to participate in the selected turf races.

Chairman Harris expressed concern that the transfer of purse monies from one sector to another may be unlawful and urged all parties to research the legalities of the issues involved.

Directors at the California Exposition and State Fair in Sacramento advised the CHRB of their intention to continue operating a harness meet next summer in place of the traditional mixed-breed meet, as they did this year. However, the directors indicated they would like to keep their options open for 2007. And they plan to explore the feasibility of installing a turf course and second dirt track inside the existing one-mile oval, so that Cal Expo could offer both harness racing and mixed-breed racing at the same meet with day and night racing programs.

Commissioner Marie Moretti, noting the decision to forego the traditional mixed-breed meet this year caused some resentment among horsemen and fans, asked Cal Expo to better inform the public of the reasons for and benefits of the harness meet, so that "people will be more receptive to the harness meet next summer."

Chairman Harris said he had received numerous complaints, especially from the mixed-breed organizations complaining about hardships due to Cal Expo not operating its traditional format. He also stated that field sizes at the Big Fresno Fair may have been impacted due to the increased gap between the other Northern California fairs and Fresno.

The Board approved license applications for race meets to be run by the Los Angeles Turf Club at Santa Anita from December 26 through April 23, the Los Alamitos Quarter Horse Racing Association at Los Alamitos Race Course from December 26 through December 17, and the Bay Meadows Racing Association at Bay Meadows from December 26 through February 5.

In an effort to protect horses and riders, the Board adopted a regulation prohibiting the use of toe grabs with a height greater than four millimeters. The prohibition stems from studies at the University of California-Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, which determined that horses wearing longer toe grabs have an increased risk of injury.

The Board adopted a rule stating that no person within the CHRB's jurisdiction may "cause an animal under his control or care to suffer any form of cruelty, mistreatment, neglect, or abuse" nor "abandon, injure, maim, kill, administer a noxious or harmful substance to, or deprive an animal of necessary care, sustenance, shelter, or veterinary care." Although the CHRB already had broad authority to deal with these matters, the new regulation will make it easier for the Board to deal with animal welfare violations.

The Board approved three directors elected to the Board of the California Thoroughbred Horsemen's Foundation, which provides assistance to backstretch workers. The newly directors are Jon Kelly, a licensed thoroughbred owner, Geri Forrester, also an owner and a current Board member, and Noble Threewitt, the longtime CTFH president and a thoroughbred trainer.

Chairman Harris asked those attending the monthly CHRB meeting for ideas to increase the overall popularity of horse racing. Among the responses, Jeff True, representing Youbet.com, said his Internet account wagering company has marketed to younger people who frequent online sports sites, such as ESPN.com, and has seen an 88-percent increase in new accounts opened by young adults (age 21 to 31) True said surveys of those new customers indicate many of them are going to racetracks three or four times a year.

Commissioner Jerry Moss noted that ESPN will be broadcasting the Breeders' Cup next year, and because ESPN will offer additional programming for horse racing, he encouraged jockeys and racetrack publicity directors to work together to provide interesting stories to ESPN and to other broadcasters.

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