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CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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BOARD WAIVES COUPLING FOR CURRENT THOROUGHBRED MEETS

SACRAMENTO, CA – The California Horse Racing Board voted Monday to temporarily waive rules requiring the coupling of horses specifically for the two current thoroughbred meetings at Bay Meadows and Hollywood Park on condition there be at least five separate wagering interests prior to any uncoupling.

The temporary suspension of rule 1606 (Coupling of Horses) and 12 related rules was the sole item on the agenda for a teleconference meeting Monday in which five racing commissioners participated. Public access to the officially noticed teleconference was provided at 10 locations throughout the State.

Following a 40-minute discussion, Chairman Richard B. Shapiro, Vice Chairwoman Marie Moretti, and Commissioners William Bianco, John Harris, and Jerry Moss voted unanimously to temporarily waive the rules to permit uncoupling on a trial basis at the two thoroughbred meets. The matter will be placed back on the agenda for the May 25 Board meeting at Los Alamitos to consider placing additional conditions on the waiver.

Commissioner Moss, who chairs the CHRB Pari-Mutuel Operations Committee and led discussions of this issue before referring it to the full Board, said one of the primary motivations for uncoupling horses is to make sure that bettors do not get stuck with the less desirable part of an entry if the horse on which they based their wagers is a late scratch.

Commissioner Harris added that an additional benefit should be more wagering interests leading to increased handle.

Jack Liebau, the president of Bay Meadows and Hollywood Park, said that upon the waiving of the rules, the two racetracks would impose a house rule requiring five separate wagering interests not including any additional wagering interests that would be created by the uncoupling of horses with common ownership interests.

Ron Charles, the president of Santa Anita Park and Golden Gate Fields, suggested that racing secretaries from all thoroughbred tracks in California should have input on the conditions for the experiment, so that all concerns could be addressed and the CHRB could gain sufficient information to determine whether to extend the experiment to other meets.

Chairman Shapiro agreed, “I want to make sure that Bay Meadows, Hollywood Park, Santa Anita, Golden Gate, and Del Mar are working in concert. The racing secretaries should get together prior to May 25 to determine what house rules are needed and to make certain the experiment comes out the right way. We could consider on May 25 any suggestions made by the racing secretaries and decide whether to impose any additional conditions. Furthermore, we will place this matter on our agenda for our June 22 meeting to learn how the experiment has been going, determine whether any issues have arisen, and see how many times the uncoupling has occurred.”

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