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**CALIFORNIA HORSE RACING BOARD**

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CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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**IT'S 'SHOW TIME' AT HOLLYWOOD PARK**

POMONA, CA – No serious injuries have been reported among any of the horses exercising over the last nine days on the new Cushion Track surface at Hollywood Park, and with local trainers boasting that horses are getting healthier every day, and horsemen elsewhere expressing interest in shipping horses to California, it's no wonder that racing commissioners, industry leaders, and horsemen agree that synthetic surfaces should have a major impact on California racing by protecting horses, attracting larger fields, stimulating fan interest, and driving up handle and purses.

The California Horse Racing Board held its monthly meeting Wednesday at Fairplex Park but the focus clearly was directed 45 miles away on Hollywood Park where trainers like Richard Mandella, Doug O'Neill, Mike Mitchell, Neil Drysdale, Jack Van Berg and many others are raving about the new main track – the first of the synthetic surfaces that will be installed at California racetracks over the next year or so.

“It's the best thing I've ever seen in California,” Mandella said Thursday at Hollywood Park. “I've never been on a backside where everybody was unanimous about the track the way they are here. California should be very excited about this.”

At the CHRB meeting Wednesday, Hollywood Park Racing Secretary Martin Panza noted that New York-based trainer Todd Pletcher will be sending a string of horses for the upcoming fall meet “and in the next week or so you are going to see a few more eastern trainers announcing they will be coming to California. I think this is going to snowball. As word spreads that we providing a safe arena for racing, we are going to see a higher quality of horses and we'll be able to fill better races.”

Many others joined the chorus in praise of Hollywood Park and synthetic surfaces, which the CHRB is requiring all thoroughbred tracks (with four or more weeks of continuous racing) to install by the end of next year. Del Mar is expected to install its new surface at the beginning of 2007, followed by Golden Gate Fields and Santa Anita Park during the summer.“

We are more excited about this upcoming race meet than for any meet in the past,” said Hollywood Park Vice President Eual Wyatt, who anticipated increasing purses for the 36-day meet but when asked by how much, couldn't even venture a guess.

Commissioner John Amerman encouraged Hollywood Park executives to take advantage of a “big marketing opportunity” during the meet that will run November 1 through December 18.

“Make sure everyone knows about the new surface, about the new chute for the turf course (allowing for one-turn, 6-furlong turf races), and the better horses and quality of racing we anticipate,” advised Amerman. “It’s a marketing director’s dream.”

Assistant General Manager Mike Ziegler said the marketing budget has been increased 30 percent and “we think we are going to have a quality product to advertise the likes of which we haven’t seen in 10 or 15 years.”

In a discussion led by Chairman Richard B. Shapiro on ways to improve racing programs in general, he quickly focused on synthetic surfaces and expectations for a higher quality of horses.

“It’s fun to see the excitement in California right now, and we need to thank Hollywood Park for reacting so quickly to our directive to install safer synthetic surfaces,” said Chairman Shapiro. “And now that we have the interest of eastern horsemen, let’s make sure we offer them plenty of racing opportunities when they get here.”

Commissioner Jerry Moss emphasized the need to offer additional higher quality races, so that more good, young horses will have opportunities to move through their conditions and enter stakes competition. This prompted Commissioner William Bianco to say, “With the additional inventory of horses, maybe writing better races won’t be a problem.”

The discussion of synthetic surfaces touched on many agenda items, including a report by Dr. Alex Ardans and Dr. Sue Stover from the University of California at Davis on the post-mortem program, which develops and recommends ways of preventing catastrophic injuries to horses.

“We are very optimistic about Polytrack-type surfaces,” said Dr. Stover. “We are optimistic we will see fewer injuries.”

Chairman Shapiro summed up the popular feeling about the Hollywood Park surface when he said during the approval process for the fall meet, “I make a motion that we begin the most exciting race meet in the history of Hollywood Park. Go get ‘em Cushion Track.”

In another major item of business on the monthly agenda, the racing commissioners heard testimony from representatives of the Thoroughbred Owners of California (TOC) and TVG over the long-standing dispute over whether providers of Advance Deposit Wagering (ADW) are required to have a contract with horsemen representing the relevant breed on the fees paid to racetracks and horsemen from ADW. The TOC has such contracts with the other two ADW providers, XpressBet and Youbet.com, but not with TVG.

After 90 minutes of discussion, the Board decided to table the matter until the October 26 meeting with the hope that the interested parties would meet and resolve the issues in the dispute.

In a related matter, some commissioners expressed interest in eliminating “exclusivity” among ADW providers and California racetracks. Chairman Shapiro said he would like to see all California racing shown on all ADW platforms throughout the year, so that fans could watch and wager on all California races no matter which ADW service they use, and he solicited an agreement from Santa Anita, horsemen, and TVG to try to work this out and to do what is best for horse racing and fans.

In other business, the Board approved the license for the Bay Meadows meet from October 18 through December 18.

Concerning race dates for 2007, Chairman Shapiro, who serves on the Strategic Planning Committee with Vice Chairman Marie Moretti and Commissioner Amerman, said the committee feels strongly that “it can’t be business as usual” with the trend of declining on-track attendance and handle. He said racing associations and fairs that do the most for California racing, including making improvements to their facilities, should be rewarded for their accomplishments with longer, preferred dates. He said the change needs to begin as early as 2007 by “reducing a number of dates, particularly in Northern California, and with the fairs running a combined meeting that provides increased racing opportunities for those fairs that do the most for horse racing.” The committee will meet again in mid-October to develop a 2007 calendar for Board consideration and approval at the October 26 meeting in Arcadia.

The Board approved rule amendments relating to procedures for entering horses in races and clarifying that any claims submitted in a race that is canceled or declared no contest shall be void.

The Board began the process of considering rules relating to the racetrack licensing process and a requirement for jockeys to submit to a breath alcohol test before the start of each racing program. Both rules were approved for notice to the public and a 45-day comment period. Darrell Haire, western regional manager for the Jockeys’ Guild, said the Guild is “OK with the proposal for alcohol testing” but will be making recommendations to ensure that proper equipment and procedures are put in place to protect the rights of jockeys.

In another matter relating to jockeys, Fravel said a working group has “finalized the protocol for the initial phase of the jockey health assessment study. We are working with the Guild to ensure enthusiastic participation by jockeys in this voluntary program” to determine the health model for jockeys and in turn develop a scale of weights based on that model. Fravel said they are “working with others around the country, so the assessment will not be strictly limited to California riders.”

The Board approved a request by representatives of northern racetracks, fairs, and the TOC who comprise the membership of the NOTWINC board to increase to 1.15 percent the amount taken from off-track handle to fund the stabling and vaning program.

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