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CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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**BOARD MOVES TO ENFORCE BAN ON LONG TOE GRABS**

ARCADIA, CA – Persuaded by testimony backed up by scientific studies that certain types of horseshoes are dangerous to horses and their riders, the California Horse Racing Board agreed Thursday to enforce a ban on long toe grabs on the front shoes of thoroughbreds in races, enforcement to begin no later than the start of the Hollywood Park and Golden Gate meetings on April 25.

Dr. Rick Arthur, the CHRB equine medical director, cited various studies, including extensive research performed by Dr. Susan Stover at the University of California, Davis, showing a correlation between racehorse injuries and toe grabs higher than 4 millimeters.

Joining with Dr. Arthur in urging the Board to ban long toe grabs were Darrel Haire, western manager for the Jockeys' Guild, Guy Lamothe, executive director of the Thoroughbred Owners of California (TOC), and Eual Wyatt, general manager of Hollywood Park.

Charles Dougherty, Jr., representing the California Thoroughbred Trainers, stated his organization's opposition to enforcement of the rule.

Vice Chairman John Harris, a strong critic of long toe grabs, said the evidence is overwhelming that such equipment contributes to injuries, and he made the motion to enforce the ban.

Chairman Richard B. Shapiro, while stating that he is personally sympathetic to the argument against unwarranted government intrusion, nonetheless was persuaded by the testimony and voted with Commissioners Marie Moretti, William Bianco, John Andreini, and Harris in a 5-1 vote to enforce the ban.

Commissioner Jerry Moss, who cast the dissenting vote, said the matter should be decided between the racetracks and horsemen, reaffirming his previously stated belief that trainers are in the position to make the best decisions for the horses. And he expressed his ongoing concern about the lack of research concerning toe grabs on synthetic surfaces, such as the Cushion Track recently installed at Hollywood Park and the Polytrack installed last year at Woodbine, where they recently lifted a ban on toe grabs up to a quarter-inch in response to the changing conditions of that surface in Canada.

Chairman Shapiro stressed the importance of giving horsemen plenty of notice before enforcement begins, prompting Dr. Arthur to suggest it start with the opening of Hollywood Park and Golden Gate in two months. Vice Chairman Harris stated that he felt that was too long of a delay.

Chairman Shapiro, who asked that an item be placed on the agenda for the March 22 Board meeting to discuss extending the ban to quarter horses, noted that a policy against long toe grabs was part of the discussion when he and Vice Chairman Harris recently participated in a telephone conference with the Welfare and Safety of the Racehorse Safety Committee of the Grayson Foundation-Jockey Club. He said it was agreed to push this policy nationally at the Association of Racing Commissioners International and elsewhere.

In other business, the Board approved a rule amendment exempting quarter-horse races from the requirement to couple horses owned in whole or in part by the same owner. This followed an experiment at Los Alamitos where such horses were uncoupled in the wagering, which led to a significant increase in wagering.

CHRB Assistant Executive Director Richard Bon Smith provided a preliminary report on the ongoing discussions and review of the Jockey Guilds' Health and Welfare Program concerning benefits being provided to California jockeys. This program receives approximately \$1 million annually from uncashed refund tickets for this purpose. More than 100 California jockeys and their families receive health care insurance under the program. The Board initiated the review to make certain the money is being used solely to provide benefits to California jockeys and to determine whether those jockeys and their families are receiving maximum benefits from the funds.

Retired jockey Ron Warren, Jr., a member of the newly created California Jockeys' Guild, said his organization would welcome the opportunity to oversee the program to provide health benefits to California jockeys utilizing the \$1 million from uncashed refunds. Chairman Shapiro explained the CHRB is obligated to allocate those funds to the organization that represents a majority of California jockeys. Vice Chairman Harris asked that staff report back on how representation is determined. Smith will be meeting with representatives of the TOC, Jockeys' Guild, California Jockeys' Guild, and other interested parties during the next few weeks. He will provide a detailed report at the March meeting.

Chairman Shapiro reported on the Wednesday meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee, which is continuing to look at ways to protect the future of California racing. The Committee previously formed two ad hoc committees to address issues in Northern and Southern California. Some key issues being addressed include the possible closures of Hollywood Park and Bay Meadows, possible legislation that could provide financial compensation to racing related to the expansion of Indian gaming, and an upcoming referendum in Dixon pertaining to the proposed racetrack in that city.

The owners of Hollywood Park have committed to conducting racing at that Inglewood racetrack at least through September 23, 2008, as part of their three-year commitment upon their purchase of the property in 2005. They could continue racing beyond that date if sufficient revenue is received through legislation. Chairman Shapiro said that in the worst-case scenario, if the economic picture does not improve sufficiently to prompt Hollywood Park to continue racing beyond its commitment, “that date is right around the corner.” He said the possibility of Hollywood Park closing in 19 months “underscores our need to plan and move forward.”

Commissioners Moss and Moretti, who also serve on the Strategic Planning Committee, agreed with Chairman Shapiro on the need to work with the Legislature “to provide this Board with the flexibility needed to adapt to the changing environment.” The goal would be a change in the Horse Racing Law allowing the Board to allocate dates based on the availability of racing venues throughout the state without being restricted by limits to date allocations in the central and southern zones.

Commissioner Moss reported on the Wednesday meeting of the Pari-Mutuel Operations Committee. He expressed appreciation for the many handicappers, fans, and industry representatives who attended the meeting and suggested various ways to protect bettors. He and Commissioner Andreini agreed to move forward with consideration of four proposals. He said the Committee would continue to review all of these proposals and would seek input from the stewards and the total racing community on these issues.

One proposal would provide the stewards with an option of having a horse run for purse money only – as a non-wagering interest – under special circumstances, such as when a horse is briefly, mistakenly, removed from the wagering pools. Another proposal would mandate the scratch of any horse when the trainer failed to report at time of entry that the horse had been gelded. Another suggestion involving the late scratch of part of an entry would require that the remaining part of the entry run for purse money only as a non-wagering interest. A fourth suggestion would treat the Pick 4 the same as the Pick 3 in that a scratch before the first leg would result in a refund of the wager and a scratch after the first leg would result in a consolation pool rather than substitution of the favorite for the scratched horse.

Dr. Arthur, reporting on the February 15 meeting of the Medication Committee, indicated it has been three weeks since the last case of Equine Herpes Virus (EHV-1) at Los Alamitos Race Course, so there is no longer a need to place any restrictions on horses traveling from Los Alamitos to other facilities. He publicly thanked the owner of Los Alamitos, Dr. Edward Allred, for his assistance and leadership in this matter, and he acknowledged the importance of the cooperation received from racetrack executives Peter Tunney, Robert Hartman, and Sean Greely at Golden Gate, where the EHV-1 problem also was brought under control. He said protocols are being put into place throughout the state to help deal with possible future EHV-1 outbreaks.

Dr. Arthur also reported that since the start of the current Santa Anita meet on December 26, no musculoskeletal injuries have occurred on the Cushion Track surface among more than 1,900 horses stabled and training at Hollywood Park, “a phenomenal statistic for California.”

The Board adopted a rule amendment requiring associations to provide in their license applications their average daily purse estimates, the names of advance deposit wagering (ADW) providers, and information describing first-aid facilities at the racetrack.

The Board authorized the distribution of \$40,099 in charity day racing proceeds by the Bay Meadows Racing Association, including \$18,000 to the Northern California Council of the Racetrack Chaplaincy, \$5,000 to the Winners Foundation, and \$8,500 to the California Thoroughbred Horsemen’s Foundation.

Chairman Shapiro requested a formal opinion from the deputy attorney general on the Board’s authority to establish procedures for resolution of disputes regarding agreements that are necessary for the conduct of a horse-racing meeting, as well as the Board’s latitude to help mitigate and/or arbitrate disputes as part of its licensing authority.

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