

News from the **North**

Working Together Today to Ensure Racing Tomorrow

By Tom Bachman

TOC Board Member and Vice-Chair Northern California

2007 is a transition year for Northern California racing. As the industry looks to the future, the parties in Northern California are doing their best to come together and tackle the tough issues. How can we avoid short fields in the winter? Where will we stable the horses while Golden Gate Fields installs their new racing surface? Where will we race when Bay Meadows closes? What is the future of racing at the fairs? These questions and much more are just some of the issues TOC's looking at on a nearly daily, ongoing basis. And while we don't have all the answers yet, I'm pleased to tell you that progress is being made, on all fronts!



Field Size

In recent years, field size in the winter was poor. One suggestion to remedy the problem was to decrease the number of race days and consolidate racehorse inventory, thus – and hopefully – increasing field size. To this end, TOC pushed for 4-day race weeks through the first quarter of 2007. What was the result? Through four 4-day race weeks during the Golden Gate Fields meet, field size increased .69 horses per race, or 10%.

Additionally, certain sub-categories of races were not written at the meet. Deciding which sub-categories to limit fell to the TOC Northern California Racing Affairs Committee. The Committee is comprised of Northern California TOC Board members, TOC's President, and two trainer representatives and one owner representative; Ed Moger, Greg Gilcrest, and Larry Ullman. Besides reviewing and approving purse levels and stakes schedules prior to each race meet, the Committee also explores other ideas to improve the Northern California racing product. In this regard, the Committee continues to push our track partners to establish and honor a predictable overnight stakes program, and to work with us in creating a two-year-old program in the North. Together, we need to offer a program that encourages and rewards owners to continue breeding and purchasing young horses, so that we build local racehorse inventory, not just trade the same horses among fewer and fewer owners.

Summer Stabling

This year's racing calendar was structured to provide Golden Gate Fields sufficient time to install the engineered racing surface mandated by the CHRB. The obvious problem was where to stable horses normally at Golden Gate for the summer.

A planning group including representatives from Golden Gate, Bay Meadows, racing fairs (CARF), California Thoroughbred Trainers (CTT), and TOC met numerous times to discuss the most feasible options for summer stabling. While we could not make every horseman happy, we tried.

In the end, we're pleased to report that CARF stepped forward – with assistance from the other parties – to ensure that enough stalls will be available throughout the summer. At this time, Pleasanton and Vallejo appear to be the primary stabling options, along with Bay Meadows. Stockton and Santa Rosa may be open longer than usual, to further alleviate any unforeseen stabling dif-

iculties. This group will continue to meet, and hammer out when necessary the details, doing its best to make it is as smooth a summer as possible.

Future Race Dates

Representatives from each live racing venue in Northern California, along with CTT and TOC, have been meeting every few weeks to plan various 2008 racing calendars, as well as consider our long-term venue options and scheduling. A plan for a new track some time in the future in Dixon must be approved by local voters on April 17. With Bay Meadows' announced closure after 2007, Golden Gate could obviously pick up a few more weeks of

racing, but the industry must still decide what its circuit will look like going forward. Certain CARF members have indicated a strong desire to step into the void, with greatly improved facilities and racing surfaces. To do so in a timely fashion, decisions and commitments must be made sooner rather than later. Santa Rosa has already made the investment in a turf course, and TOC supports its plan to run three weeks this summer.

Representatives are scheduled to meet again in early May and continue talks for 2008 and beyond.



Trainer Ed Moger pointed out aspects of conformation.

Seminar Update

On another note, our educational seminars in the North continue to pick up steam. TOC's most recent was held at Bay Meadows on February 24. More than 40 participants enjoyed informative presentations on conformation and visited several barns, getting "hands on" tips from trainers as to their views on what to look for in a fast horse. Stop by the TOC office at the live race meet or visit our website for the location and topic of our next seminar.

As one of your Northern California TOC Board members, I'm committed to working together with our members and the racing associations to make racing the best it can be, now and in the future. I welcome the input of all members, and look forward to hearing from you. I can be reached at 707-321-0068 or tbach6525@aol.com.