

# News from the **North**

## *Working Together Today to Ensure Racing Tomorrow*

*By Richard Scheidt*

In our last issue, we touched on the fact that 2007 was a “transition year” for Northern California. Well, as it stands now, it appears as if 2008 will look a lot like 2007, with significant changes in the racing calendar postponed one more year.

For 2007, the industry sought to assess subtle changes in the Fair racing schedule as a preliminary measure of anticipated future revisions of the Northern California racing calendar. Un-overlapped Fair meets were viewed by some as “experiments” from which we could all learn. That still is the case, but what we learn this year – and next – will now be used to begin transitioning in 2009, toward what all believe will be a much brighter future for the North. The extra time really should help with making the necessary changes.

While some may see this turn of events as just another setback, “the delay” could in reality be fortuitous. Though still possible in 2007, issuance of the permits needed to install the new racing surface at Golden Gate Fields appears to be stalled by the desire of environmental groups to secure unrelated concessions from the owner of Golden Gate. This political wrangling is likely to delay the project until late in the year, or even into 2008.

If that indeed is the case, then both Northern California Thoroughbred racetracks will need – and are likely to receive – engineered surface “exemptions” from the CHRB. In the meantime, representatives of all Northern California racing associations and Fairs will continue to meet regularly with the TOC and CTT in a cooperative effort to develop both a calendar certain for 2008 and concrete transition plans for the future.

### **Summer Fair Racing**

Racing this summer will be conducted at seven different venues, as it has for the previous two summers. However, as mentioned above, 2007 brings two significant changes to the schedule.

The San Joaquin Fair in Stockton celebrates 75 years of racing with their Diamond Jubilee anniversary, and will run un-overlapped for the first time in recent memory. Traditionally,

the first week of racing in Stockton ran concurrently with either Bay Meadows or Golden Gate Fields, then as the only Northern racing venue for week two. In response to challenges from the CHRB, the management team in Stockton suggested it be permitted to run un-overlapped as a one-year experiment, in the hopes of better assessing its long-term viability.

Following Stockton, the popular Alameda County Fair in Pleasanton will run its traditional race days, including the Fourth of July. In years past, Fair racing continued with two weeks in Vallejo, followed by two more in Santa Rosa. This year the two fairs have aligned to conduct the first ever Sonoma Solano Wine Country Race Meet. The first five days of the meet will be run in Vallejo at the Solano County Fair, followed by 18 days of racing in Santa Rosa at the Sonoma County Fair. This combined meet also will be run as an “experiment” in 2007, with the results evaluated similarly to the Stockton meet. The San Mateo and Humboldt County Fairs will again run concurrently in mid-August, with the Big Fresno Fair in its usual place, the conclusion of Fair racing in October.

Race dates for each fair including post times, condition books and overnights, and additional racing information may be found on their website [www.calfairs.com](http://www.calfairs.com).

### **Seminar Update**

Educational seminars at Bay Meadows and Golden Gate Fields were offered in March and May, respectively. At Bay Meadows, participants were given a look at the ins and outs of various claiming strategies from the perspective of an owner and a trainer, and learned more about the administrative side of the business from a CHRB steward. The seminar at Golden Gate Fields focused on business basics, including how to set up a business plan, partnership considerations, and tax preparation. Both seminars concluded with barn tours and a question-and-answer session with trainers.

Don't forget to visit our website, [www.toconline.com](http://www.toconline.com), for topics, dates, and locations of our upcoming Northern California events and seminars. And be sure to mark your calendars for the TOC Annual Meeting at Bay Meadows on Saturday, Sept. 29, beginning at 11:00 a.m. in the Owner-Trainer Lounge.



*A crowd watches horses in the paddock at the Stockton Fair.*