

# News from the **North**

## *Working Together Today to Ensure Racing Tomorrow*

By Richard Scheidt

### **Seminar Update**

Ownership 101 hit the road in July with a stop in Santa Rosa at the Sonoma County Fair. A crowd of over 200 heard track announcer and thoroughbred owner Vic Stauffer and guest trainer Steve Sherman discuss the basics of racehorse ownership. Their presentations were informative and entertaining, enthusiastically comparing racehorse ownership to owning one's own sports franchise. Stauffer and Sherman also stressed the importance of owners and trainers working together with common and realistic goals.

In September, at Bay Meadows, new TOC Board member and long-time Northern California veterinarian Dr. Kim Kuhlmann, along with trainer Brian Pitnick, focused on thoroughbred acquisitions. After touching on the basics of claiming, they discussed strategies for purchasing at auction. Following their presentations, a barn tour hosted by John Martin was a positive experience for attendees.

Next up on the Northern California seminar schedule: October 13th at the Big Fresno Fair, and November 17th at Golden Gate Fields. Visit [www.toconline.com](http://www.toconline.com) for all the details.

### **Golden Gate's New Track Opens Early**

After much consternation about whether Golden Gate Fields would start, much less complete, installation of its new engineered racing surface this year, ground was broken in late July, with the new track opening for training ten days ahead of schedule.

Golden Gate installed *Tapeta*, a synthetic surface similar to *Cushion Track* and *Polytrack*; a mixture of sand, rubber, carpet fibers and other materials, all coated with a polymer wax. Currently in use at the new Presque Isle Downs in Pennsylvania, *Tapeta* has received positive reviews from horseman. As the first engineered surface in Northern California, the surface should help to increase field size and sustain healthier horses, especially during winter months.

In addition to the new surface, Golden Gate invested more than \$1 million in improvements to the barn area, including newly paved roadways, updated electrical infrastructure, fresh paint, new water heaters, and general barn repairs. Horsemen now enjoy safer, more comfortable surroundings on both the track and backside.

All are invited to stop by the TOC office, adjacent to the paddock, and take an up-close look at the new *Tapeta* racing surface. The TOC office can be reached by calling (510) 559-7521.

### **Racing Calendar – 2008 and Beyond**

Differences as to the nature of the 2008 Northern California racing calendar appear to have been resolved in principle by the racing associations, CARF, and TOC, after numerous, sometimes contentious, meetings between the parties.

As it now stands, Golden Gate Fields will race from December 26, 2007, through February 3, 2008. Bay Meadows will then operate what is likely to be its last meet, in the first half of the year – from February 6 through May 11 – followed by a spring race meet at Golden Gate Fields running through June 22. The Northern Fairs will run during a block of dates stretching from June 25

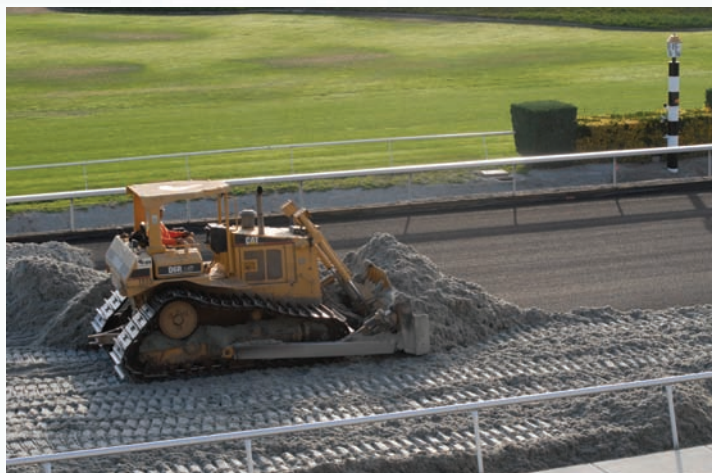
through September 14, with racing returning to Golden Gate the remainder of the year. Changes to the fair schedule for 2008 include the California State Fair at Cal Expo in Sacramento returning from a three year hiatus to run a Thoroughbred and mixed meet from August 20 through Labor Day, and the San Joaquin Fair in Stockton shifting from late June to the first two weeks in September. The Big Fresno Fair is scheduled to run its traditional dates in October.

With the development of Bay Meadows looming, its

owner would not commit to racing beyond the San Mateo County Fair's traditional dates in August. However, as a result of negotiations between all concerned, Bay Meadows Land Company provided assurances that the barn area and track surface would remain open until the end of the year, as long as it is safe for horseman and their horses.

When Bay Meadows eventually closes, the need for additional stalls to accommodate horses traditionally stabled there will be paramount. Keeping the Bay Meadows' barn area open through the end of the year will allow those facilities seeking additional race dates going forward to make the necessary improvements to house displaced horses and horsemen.

With the stage set for 2008, the industry will soon be taking a more in depth look at race calendars and venues for 2009 and beyond. TOC, along with the racing associations and Fairs, will continue to meet, ensuring a brighter future for racing in Northern California.



*Installation of Tapeta surface at Golden Gate Fields.*