



Thrills, Fears and Perseverence

Looking forward to the status of racing in California as 2007 begins, I found myself awed at the manner in which this sport niche continues to survive. As a representative of the nearly 9,000 individuals who hold licenses for ownership of thoroughbred racehorses, I share both their thrills and fears. No other sport is propelled solely on individual guts, hopes, dreams, and purses. Progress of our horses occurs with all the alacrity of grass growing. Good things are happening that provoke visions of better times ahead. 2007 may well become a watershed year for California racing. Here are some of the events we can expect to help boost the status and profitability.

One very basic change is well underway. We have already seen the installation of a new and much kinder racing surface. It was one of the first advancements that has not been met by doomsayers claiming calamity. Throughout the ranks of owners, trainers, veterinarians, and all those people concerned for the safety and well being of our horses, there is universal praise for the new surfaces. My hope is that the logjam of acquiring the materials doesn't slow the process of all tracks constructing the new surfaces. The only complaint I heard was from a dedicated handicapper who seemed to claim that all his work and the resulting systems have become meaningless. He claimed that he was quitting. He'll be back. Entrenched bettors can't resist the pull of the windows. All we've done is create a more level playing field.

TOC has recognized the need for far more intense pressure to be applied to the questions and practices of horse medication. More and better testing procedures, stiffer and more quickly applied penalties are on the horizon. The work goes to the heart of racing's integrity. Insuring racing's integrity is a top priority. 2007 will show important forward steps.

One of TOC's most important business interests is redesigning the ADW systems. My hopes for the possible changes are fired by ongoing negotiations between owners of the ADW outlets. TOC has worked hard to bring all the parties together and provide a way for all racing fans to see and wager on all available tracks, through the ADW provider of their choice, not the choice of isolated racetrack executives alone. If it isn't fully corrected, the empowering laws and regulations will be totally rewritten before the close of 2007.

Finally, if horsemen and tracks unify in a reasonable manner, then 2007 could see a reassignment of monies that can be applied to nourish all purses. A mitigating proposition is in very early stages of discussion. The process by which this can happen must be carefully and cooperatively nurtured. If our hopes are realized, racing could see a doubling of purses – which would continue to place California on a par with states that have tracks combined with casinos.

Let's hope it happens in 2007.

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