



From the Executive Corner

Paying Dividends

by DOUG BURGE

With the ultimate success of horse racing dependent on large competitive fields, the recently concluded California Gold Rush XII day at Hollywood Park was a welcome to all. Offering \$852,600 in restricted purses, the nine Gold Rush races originally drew a total of 88 entries, or an average of 9.8 horses per race. Even with no pick six carryover and several late scratches, the event once again proved popular to fans and bettors across the country as the total handle for the day was nearly \$11.5 million.

A unique aspect of this state-bred day is the diversity in the types of races offered. There are multiple black-type opportunities as well as rich purses for maidens and first condition allowance horses. With nearly a race for everyone, horsemen continue to target and support this spring event.

One key reason for the large number of entries is the inclusion of the extremely popular Maiden Bonus Program. The Gold Rush card offered two maiden stakes with an inflated purse of more than \$60,000 each. When factoring in the \$20,000 bonus, the winning owners net \$56,000 for their horse breaking its maiden. As a result of this lucrative return, the maiden stakes offered—Alphabet Kisses Stakes for fillies and mares and NTRA (National Thoroughbred Racing Association) Stakes) for colts and geldings—drew 14 and 19 entries, respectively. Because the California Thoroughbred Breeders Association (CTBA), Hollywood Park and Thoroughbred Owners of California (TOC) wanted to assure that all horsemen have the ability to compete on this day, the NTRA Stakes was split into two divisions.

Since its inception in late 2009, the Maiden Bonus Program has yielded more than a 50 percent increase in the

number of California-bred maiden special weight winners in both the north and south. Owners and breeders of Cal-breds are being rewarded like never before.

Also, the racing secretaries in Southern California are very supportive and appreciative of the Maiden Bonus Program, as nearly every restricted maiden special weight race written year to date has filled and been used. In fact, according to the California Horse Racing Information Management System (CHRIMS) database, these restricted races in 2011 are averaging over eight runners per race, well over the open race average.

Originally it was the goal of the CTBA to try and pay these bonus awards around 30 days from the win. The overwhelming success of the program, combined with the decline in funding (handle), has attributed to the current policy of awarding the bonus checks approximately 45 racing days from the win. As the program is partially funded from monies received every 20 to 30 racing days from the racetracks, and then a matching sum from TOC, the collection and payment process takes a considerable amount of time.

All parties want the program to continue to grow and succeed, and are working together to sustain the funding and awards that have been made available. There is no question that this Maiden Bonus Program is generating the results that we had hoped for; from both stimulating the retention of quality mares, offering the necessary economic incentives for owners and breeders, as well as providing a better racing program for the wagering public.

Congratulations to all who continue to benefit from the addition of the bonus awards to the overall incentive program. 🐾



On My Honor—\$62,000 NTRA Stakes



Awesome Indy—\$61,200 NTRA Stakes



Sparkling Style—\$62,800 Alphabet Kisses Stakes

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