

# A Change For The Best



*From The Executive Corner*

by DOUG BURGE

Historically, this editorial page in the October issues of *California Thoroughbred* has been dedicated to California Cup, with an annual welcome and preview of the event.

This year, however, the decision was made to move Cal Cup from its traditional placement during the Autumn Meet at Santa Anita Park and merge the day with Sunshine Millions in January, which will provide an extremely lucrative day with more stakes opportunities for California-breds.

Furthermore, the shift from autumn to Santa Anita's longer Winter/Spring Meet should prove for a more successful day with increased handle and attendance, as this event will be a major focus of that extended meet and be spaced months after Breeders' Cup.

Over the last decade, Cal Cup has experienced continued declines because it was held within one to two weeks of Breeders' Cup, and thus had to compete with the national two-day event for attendance and handle. In particular, when Breeders' Cup is held in California, the media and fan focus for the weeks leading up have been mostly on that event. In comparison, Sunshine Millions occurs on a day in which there is little competition in both the racing and sports world, and thus has yielded extremely positive results. With the inclusion of Cal Cup, the day should be very well received while featuring top Cal-breds. Plus, the shift to late January will allow Cal-breds the option of competing both on a national stage at Breeders' Cup, and also on the Sunshine Millions/California Cup day in which restricted purses will be more than \$1 million.

Santa Anita's Autumn Meet will still provide many stakes opportunities for Cal-breds including a showcase of top juveniles on the Breeders' Cup Friday undercard with the first runnings of the Golden State Juvenile and the Golden State Juvenile Fillies, the renamed California Breeders Champion Stakes races each with a purse of \$200,000. This will be the first time that multiple restricted stakes will be included with

the Breeders' Cup program and will provide tremendous national exposure for Cal-breds. People around the country, and world, will see first-hand the value and strength of the Cal-bred racing and breeding program. We are indeed very

excited about this opportunity, which should offer full fields and great betting as well.

Two additional restricted stakes, the \$100,000 California Distaff Handicap and \$100,000 California Flag Handicap, for older horses about 6 1/2 furlongs on the hillside turf course, will also be offered in the fall. Both of these races could be utilized as prep races for either the Breeders' Cup Turf Sprint, or the other graded stakes turf races offered during that closing weekend.

We view all of these shifts and additions as a major opportunity to better showcase and promote the earning potential for Cal-bred owners and breeders. With \$5.27 million in total stakes purses, the Golden State Series continues to grow and become an integral part of the \$35 million Cal-bred incentive and racing program.

A special thanks to Santa Anita, the Thoroughbred Owners of California (TOC) and Breeders' Cup for their support in further enhancing our state-bred benefits. 🐾



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