

A Golden Opportunity



From The Executive Corner

by DOUG BURGE

The Golden State Series of stakes races for nominated California-bred or California-sired horses is in its third year, and now consists of 35 stakes races and \$5.3 million in total purses. When first launched in 2012, the focus of the series was to provide significant purses and opportunities for two- and three-year-olds with the goal of providing a quick return to owners and breeders. With racing in state so dependent on the local product, such an emphasis on juvenile races was important to provide immediate stabilization with the foal crop numbers while at the same time both improving the commercial market and focusing on quality.

The recent upward trends with the live foal crops and number of mares bred in the state has proven the success of the program. Also, the commercial market for Cal-breds, both in state and out of state, has also improved since the introduction of the series.

When first announced, there was the commitment to expand the purses and opportunities for older horses as well. Through the involvement of the California Thoroughbred Breeders Association (CTBA) Racing Committee, we now have a more balanced program with racing opportunities for all ages. In fact, when first launched, purses for older horses were just over \$1 million, or 22 percent in total. For 2014, total purses for older horses are now over \$2 million or nearly 40 percent of the total. Purses and opportunities for two or three-year-olds have been protected as well.

The aspect of the program that needs improvement, however, is the number of opportunities made available in Northern California. Currently, the Golden State Series

supplements two stakes races for three-year-olds at Golden Gate Fields. The CTBA, and its membership, have repeatedly asked for more restricted stakes opportunities in the north, with the big obstacle being the lack of stakes dollars allocated from the purse account as the emphasis in Northern California has been mostly on overnight races in order to protect the current horse population.

The Golden State Series, which is funded by nomination fees, stallion fees and California Marketing Committee (CMC) contributions, simply supplements stakes races in the state after the commitment from the purse account. In order to keep the prestige of the series and its black-type (now that higher minimum purse standards have been placed on new races), total purses for inclusion begin at \$100,000. We do understand the concerns of those breeding and racing in the north, and are currently discussing with the tracks and Thoroughbred Owners of California (TOC) on ways to allocate more purse money to stakes so that the Golden State Series can supplement and offer further opportunities. We are confident that we will be adding a race, or more, particularly at one of the Northern Californian fairs. The expansion of opportunities in the north will be a major focus.

We do hope that breeders/owners in both Northern California and Southern California see the benefits of this program and the increased value for their Cal-breds. Many horses bred or started in the north have been extremely successful since the creation of the series. A complete list of the Golden State Series Stakes stakes races appears on page 60. 🐎



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