



TY Green

CTBA BOARD MEMBER

DOES IT HAVE TO BE NORTH VS. SOUTH?

I've put off writing this editorial as long as I can. I've played with the dog, sorted through the mail, even sat while my wife described her mother's latest ailments. The deadline to turn this in is tomorrow, and the truth is that it's difficult to write.

The truth is that California racing is in midst of a crisis, and how we manage it could ultimately determine our very existence. The truth is that careers and livelihoods are at risk. The truth is that there is an internal rift in California horse racing, with emotions high and trust low. And the truth that makes this piece so difficult to write is that I don't have the answer. I can't even write what I think the solution is.

But as I agonized over what I was going to say to an industry full of passionate, dedicated people and a sport that I love, I received a call that a dear friend had just passed away. And then, as I set down to meet the deadline still processing that devastating news, my 75-pound mutt Miles decided that it was a good time to play and started running around my desk, unplugging my computer, and generally making a mess—and still wanting to play. I stopped and sat for a bit, thinking that maybe the concept of perspective was tapping me on the shoulder. And so, I will try.

As most of you have probably read, the esteemed John Harris and I, along with trainer Andy Mathis, agreed to replace the three Northern California TOC directors who resigned in protest. The situation best came through to me when I saw a headline to the effect that we three were joining a "Fractured Board." The question I'm most often asked is why? Why do you want to get involved when, no matter what you

do, about half of your "constituents" are going to be angry? I don't have an answer other than I have loved California racing, both North and South, for more than 50 years and find it heartbreaking to see battle lines forming between the North and South and am naïve enough to think that maybe I can somehow help to reach a resolution.

Obviously, I enter the fray with some resolution and some opinions. One resolution was that, while being aware of the issues that resulted in the prior directors resigning, I am going to look forward and with an open mind. What I have found, after much study and discussion, is that the regulatory/financial scheme underlying California racing is complex and possibly somewhat lacking. I have also found that, while a considerable number of folks on either side are firmly entrenched in their positions, no one bases their position on malice.

The problem is that there is a limited pie, with various groups staking a good faith claim to their slice, but each feeling that the slice they have is too small. This is nothing new, as I ran across a speech given by John Van de Kamp in the mid-1990s.

In that speech, Mr. Van de Kamp sets out the problems facing racing. That speech could be given today because the issues are the same: There was and remains ever-increasing competition for the gambling dollar in California, and we must find a way to grow the pie significantly. To my mind, that requires a united effort from all California horsemen, which makes the current situation all the sadder.

I mentioned that I entered the fray with not only resolution but opinions. One of those opinions, which I believe is shared

by my fellow CTBA board members, is that maintaining racing in California as a whole is vital for the health of our breeding industry. One of my strong opinions, which I have been trying to share with others on the TOC, is the devastating effect losing racing in the North will have on the California breeding industry, particularly the smaller breeders. I'm also consistently and strongly sharing my belief that the resulting loss of breeding will have a devastating effect on the already critical size of fields in Southern California. Not everyone agrees, but I, along with John and Andy, are committed to making sure the contribution of Cal-breds is considered when any decisions are made.

And now I find perspective still tapping me on the shoulder and telling me that despite the complex regulatory underpinnings of racing, the real problem is quite simple and straightforward. We simply must find ways to make the pie grow. Rather than fighting each other over what may become scraps, all California horsemen must work together to create additional revenue. The perspective isn't that this is a winner-take-all situation. In my opinion, if there is a winner, victory will be short-lived. My perspective is that we all win, or we all lose and that the failure to maintain that perspective may well ultimately be our downfall.

I want to close by making it very clear that I agreed to join the TOC in large part to do what I can to protect the California breeding industry, including small breeders like me. Cal-breds have kept California racing viable for the past decade or so. California breeding and racing in California go hand-in-hand. We forget that at our peril. **CTB**