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BOARD ACTS TO BAN STEROIDS IN CALIFORNIA RACING

DEL MAR, CA – The California Horse Racing Board fulfilled its promise to the public and the industry Thursday by unanimously adopting a regulation that effectively bans anabolic steroids in California horse racing.

"We are one of the leading states to move forward with this ban. There is no place for anabolic steroids in competition sports, human or equine," noted CHRB Chairman Richard B. Shapiro, who indicated that other industry leaders have been "very appreciative that we are helping lead the way."

The Board indicated its intentions more than a year ago by taking the first of several regulatory steps designed to ban the administration of anabolic steroids to horses competing in a race. These steps included moving some anabolic steroids into drug and penalty categories that automatically require disqualification and forfeiture of the purse and adopting penalty guidelines calling for stricter sanctions for medication violations. In its latest and final step Thursday, the Board moved the anabolic steroids testosterone, boldenone, nandrolone, and stanozolol into a higher classification, so that now, without exception, any steroid violation will result in the disqualification of the horse. And under the new penalty guidelines, such violations could result in a minimum 30-day suspension.

Procedurally, the change still must be approved by the Office of Administrative Law, which could take as long as two months, but the Board fully expects this process to be completed well before the Breeders' Cup World Championships on October 24 and 25 at Santa Anita Park, hosted by the Oak Tree Racing Association. The CHRB is working with Breeders' Cup and Oak Tree officials to spread the word that steroids will not be tolerated in what is being described as the first "steroids-free Breeders' Cup."

On Tuesday, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger filled two vacancies on the Board with the appointments of Bo Derek and David Israel, bringing the Board to its full complement of seven members. Commissioners Derek and Israel joined with Vice Chairman John Harris, Commissioners Jerry Moss, John Andreini and Jesse Choper, and Chairman Shapiro in voting unanimously to approve the regulatory amendment.

Dr. Rick Arthur, the CHRB equine medical director, who worked with Dr. Scott Stanley of the Ken Maddy Laboratory at UC Davis in developing protocols and procedures for the steroids testing that began July 1, noted that until the Office of Administrative Law has completed its review and the regulatory change is fully in place, the Board will continue to send out warnings to horsemen when testosterone, boldenone, nandrolone, and stanozolol are detected in official samples. But he cautioned that once the approval process is complete, "we are prepared to take the next step."

"I hope to see us move forward and close the loop," said Chairman Shapiro. "We have gone out of our way to give everyone fair warning, to address concerns, put out a Q & A, and provide contact information for anyone who still has questions."

Trainer Christopher Paasch stood and complimented the Board for "moving forward and stopping the steroid abuse." When he went on to advocate tough stands against other drugs as well, Chairman Shapiro and Dr. Arthur assured Paasch and everyone else that the new penalty guidelines that went into effect this month are going to lead to substantial sanctions for medication violations. "It's going to be a different ballgame in the future," said Dr. Arthur.

The steroids Q & A mentioned by the chairman as well as other news releases and advisories pertaining to steroids, medication rules, and the penalty guidelines can be viewed on the CHRB website (www.chrb.ca.gov) under the "News" prompt.

In other business, the Board unanimously adopted a regulatory amendment prohibiting posterior digital neurectomies, or "heel nerving." Any horse that undergoes such a procedure after October 1, 2008, will be prohibited from racing. This prohibition was opposed by the Thoroughbred Owners of California, which believes California should wait for a national policy.

While acknowledging the TOC position, Chairman Shapiro said it was time for the Board to act, noting, "We should not take any chance that a horse has lost any sensitivity in a foot during a race." Commissioner Moss agreed that for a heel-nerved horse to "go down and cause an accident in a race would be horrible." And Vice Chairman Harris said, "It's time to get this behind us and move on."

The Board approved two license applications for the San Mateo County Fair, one to operate a mixed-breed fair meet at Bay Meadows from August 6 through August 17, and the other to operate a satellite wagering facility at the San Mateo County Event Center adjacent to Bay Meadows beginning August 20.

The August 17 conclusion of the San Mateo County Fair meet will mark the end of racing forever at Bay Meadows, which is scheduled for demolition later this year to make way for developing the property for other uses. Fair General Manager Christopher Carpenter said events are planned to honor the history of Bay Meadows and acknowledge its closing.

Horses will continue to train at Bay Meadows until later in the year. The industry has developed a plan for Board consideration that would shift most of the race dates vacated by Bay

Meadows over to Golden Gate Fields, to be run either by the owner of Golden Gate or by the Alameda County Fair, which would lease the facility. The Alameda County Fair would run its races at Golden Gate during development of the Pleasanton racing complex into a year-round training facility.

The satellite facility will open August 20, three days after the close of the fair meet, replacing the simulcast facility at Bay Meadows, which has ranked fifth in the state for attendance, attracting more than 500,000 simulcast patrons a year. Carpenter said an existing building has been renovated at the Events Center and an adjacent building will provide overflow space. Noting a reduction in wagering terminals allocated for the new facility, Vice Chairman Harris urged Carpenter to make certain there are sufficient terminals to adequately handle the volume experienced at Bay Meadows. He noted that a loss of wagering in Northern California would hurt not only the San Mateo County Fair, but also many other stakeholders.

The Board also approved license applications for the San Joaquin County Fair meet in Stockton (September 3 – 14) and the Los Angeles County Fair meet at Fairplex Park in Pomona (September 5 – 22).

The Board authorized the distribution of $217,843 in race-day charity proceeds by the Los Angeles Turf Club (Santa Anita) to 40 beneficiaries.

While clearly signaling their intent to approve, the Board sent two proposed regulatory amendments back out for 15-day public notice with minor changes to the texts, including a proposal to allow thoroughbred horses to race unshod. Notwithstanding, the Board indicated it would suspend the portion of the rule that requires horses to be shod, as long as it is publicly noted in the official program. Both amendments will be brought back to the Board for public hearings..

Vice Chairman Harris noted that while this proposal to allow horses to race unshod has been around for some time, the installation of synthetic surfaces at the major thoroughbred tracks in California has helped push it forward because some horses appear to be training better without shoes on the new surfaces. The amendment would allow a horse to race unshod if the trainer feels the horse might run better without shoes. Any changes would be noted on the official program.

The other amendment would mandate $1,000 fines, absent mitigating circumstances, should a trainer fail to declare at time of entry that a horse had been gelded since its last start. It is hoped that increased fines will motivate trainers to pay more attention and provide this information to the public on the official program well before wagering begins. Some commissioners indicated that if the increased fines do not solve the persistent problem of late announcements of first-time geldings, they are prepared to take the more severe step of scratching such horses from their races.

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