

# The Complete Horsemen's Guide to the Inaugural Sunshine Millions

by RUDI GROOTHEDDE

Since the announcement in October that the inaugural running of the Sunshine Millions was now official, the parties involved with this unique day of racing have been busy putting together information for the horsemen who have shown interest in supporting the event. Scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 25, 2003, at both Santa Anita Park and Gulfstream Park, this guaranteed \$3.6 million day has caused much interest amongst those involved in the local Thoroughbred industry.

To answer a lot of the questions that people have been asking about this innovative event, a 'Horsemen's Information Booklet' is now available. Copies of this publication, which explains the concept of this groundbreaking day and provides a guide to all its rules and regulations, can be picked up at a majority of the local racing outlets.

Essentially, this new and exciting day on the racing calendar, for which only California- and Florida-breds are eligible, comprises eight races split between the two aforesaid racing venues. In this way, the format will provide head-to-head competition that showcases the best horses the leading breeders in these states have to offer.

With respect to the important dates to look out for, it is all relatively straightforward. Monday, Dec. 9, 2002, is the cut-off date for the early bird nominations (\$100) while the \$500 regular nominations need to be made by Saturday, Jan. 11, 2003. After that, pre entries need to be taken by Wednesday, Jan. 15, followed by the post-position draw that will be held on Monday, Jan. 20.

Regarding the details of the individual races, their purses will range in value from \$250,000 to an awesome \$1 million. The latter is being offered for the Classic, the headline event for older horses at 1 1/8 miles to be contested in Florida this time and then in California during the second edition of the Sunshine Millions in 2004.

Santa Anita Park's events in 2003 will include the \$750,000 Distaff (for older fillies and mares at 1 1/16 miles), the \$500,000 Turf (for older horses at 1 1/8 miles on the lawn), the \$250,000 Sprint (for older horses at six furlongs) and the \$250,000 Oaks (for 3-year-old fillies at seven furlongs). The balance of the races will thus be held at Gulfstream Park and will include the \$350,000 Filly and Mare

Turf (for older fillies and mares at 1 1/8 miles on the grass), the \$250,000 Filly and Mare Sprint (for older fillies and mares at six furlongs) and the \$250,000 Dash (for 3-year-olds at seven furlongs).

Concerning the aforementioned restriction relating to the horses having to be foaled in either California or Florida, entrants also need to be registered with either the California Thoroughbred Breeders Association (CTBA) or the Florida Thoroughbred Breeders and Owners Association (FTBOA). Besides that, the conditions of each event are pretty much standard, and horsemen should note that there will be no supplementary nominations and entry fees will range between \$1,250 and \$5,000. As a further incentive to participate, all unplaced shippers will receive a reimbursement of up to \$10,000 for travelling expenses, based on the mode of transport used, i.e. aircraft (Instone Forwarding Company), horse van or other.

Each race will be drawn with six horses from both states, along with also-eligibles. However, for the races in California, if less than six Florida-breds enter then additional Cal-breds will be allowed to enter to ensure a full field of 12, and vice versa for the events being staged on the other side of the country. Conversely, should more

than a dozen horses enter for any particular race then preference will be given as follows: graded stakes winners in 2002-2003; stakes winners in 2002-2003; winners of two races other than claiming; winner of one race other than claiming; and then horses with the highest earnings in non-claiming races in 2002-2003.

For pertinent information and answers to any questions about the medication rules, the California Horse Racing Board (CHRB) or the Florida Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering are the ones to contact. For any other information, horsemen should contact either Santa Anita Park's Rick Hammerle at (626) 574-6473 or Gulfstream Park's Dave Bailey (954) 457-6260.

By taking all of these details into consideration, the inaugural running of the Sunshine Millions certainly promises to be a great day of racing. So, now is the time to plan ahead for an event that guarantees the best of both worlds, namely the successful breeding and racing programs of California and Florida competing in a truly championship day.

