

From the Executive Office



Abundantly Optimistic

July 2003 brings a sense of optimism to Thoroughbred racing. In California we are approaching the opening of the prestigious Del Mar meet and the annual renewal of the Del Mar Yearling Sale.

On the national front, we are all anxiously awaiting the national release of the "Seabiscuit" motion picture on July 25. It is the hope of all in the industry that this story of one of our sport's most famous stars will help put racing back in the limelight.

Most are familiar with this fascinating story of an unlikely hero that surfaced in the mid 1930's when America needed one the most. The CTBA and California Thoroughbred Foundation (CTF) were able to assist in the production and promotion of this film by making available the numerous memorabilia items that had been previously contributed by the Howard family.

Our participation consisted of providing the original racing silks for use by the motion picture's costume designers as well as for the many documentaries that were also produced. Other useful items on display at the CTBA include the 1938 Pimlico Special match race trophy, other trophies/bronzes awarded to Seabiscuit, many pictures, Christmas cards and a host of other memorabilia.

With the overall goal of utilizing "Seabiscuit" to promote the history and tradition of Thoroughbred racing, it is important that the industry utilize its resources to capitalize on this opportunity. As a member of the National Thoroughbred Racing Association's Industry Council, I am pleased to report that the NTRA has a specific marketing plan for both the promotion of the movie and of the member tracks that are racing live in the months of July and August.

The NTRA plans an "In Theatre Promotion" that includes a three-minute film that will be shown on as many as 5,500 movie screens in 525 facilities. This

segment will include film footage and interviews with actors, as well as current racing footage. In applicable markets in which member tracks are conducting live racing, the feature will include graphics and messages promoting the local tracks. In certain instances, movie ticket stubs may be redeemed for free admission at a local racetrack.

Other NTRA promotional plans include: officially licensed "Seabiscuit" merchandise; on-track/online ticket contest giveaways; television commercials; a television documentary; and advance screenings.

It is very important that racing capitalize on this opportunity to advance the sport through the association with the potential success of the movie. I am glad to see the NTRA take a lead role in seizing this opportunity. We have dedicated a section of this month's *California Thoroughbred* to "Seabiscuit: The Movie." Our coverage begins on page 27.

As I mentioned earlier, the Del Mar Yearling Sale is also right around the corner. In each of the past few years, it seems as if I have sounded like a broken record when referring to the prospects of the coming sale. Once again, I am able to state that this is one of the best groups that we have ever seen, both on pedigree and conformation.

With the record results that we have experienced the last two years, we continue to see more breeders test the commercial market by placing their top yearlings in the auction.

As in 2002, there will be 159 yearlings cataloged in the sale. It is our policy to catalog at least 80 percent California-breds. This year nearly 90 percent of those offered are Cal-breds, further illustrating the quality and worth of horses bred in the Golden State. I am looking forward to a strong sale and hope to see everyone at the Del Mar HorsePark in August.

— Doug Burge